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LEGENDS

OF

NUMBER NIP.

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LEGENDS

OF

NUMBER NIP.

BY

MARK LEMON.

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INTRODUCTION.

"We find in most countries," says the Fairy Historian, Mr. Keightley, "a popular belief in different classes of beings, distinct from men and from the higher orders of divinities. These beings are usually believed to inhabit, in the caverns of the earth, or the depths of the waters, a region of their own. They generally excel mankind in power and in knowledge, and, like them, are subject to the inevitable laws of death, though after a more prolonged period of existence." Many circumstances of late years have combined to destroy the popular belief in Fairies, Fays, Elves, Trolls, and Dwarfs, although few persons can honestly declare that they have ceased to have an interest in the stories wherein the Good People play the prin-

cipal parts. Practical as the age is said to be, and devoted more to the cultivation of material possessions that any which have preceded it, human nature is in reality unchanged, and the love of the imaginative displays itself in many ways, even when that elevating faculty is disowned by its possessor. Music is now heard in almost every home, the painter's art endeavours to embody the poet's thought, or the historian's chronicle; the beautiful in form is sought to be realized in every thing that we employ for use, comfort, or display, thus paying homage to the Imaginative whilst professing to consider the Material as omnipotent. No, we have not parted with the Fairies; nor are we willing to cast away the works of those who have recorded their exploits in the wonderful Fairy-land, or in the no less beautiful world around us; and they will live on to amaze and delight as they have done for hundreds of years.

All lovers of fairy-lore know how deeply they

are indebted to such laborious and learned searchers into the archives of Elf-Land as Thiele, Jacob Grimm, and his brother, Hans Andersen, Thomas Keightley, Crofton Croker, and others who have thought it worthy of their wisdom to read and write about the Good People and their marvellous doings.

Among the earlier collectors of Fairy stories, Johann Karl Musæus stands foremost, and his "Volksmärchen der Deutschen, or Popular Legends of Germany," have made his name a household word in his own country until this day. These stories are what they profess to be, narratives and legends collected from old women at the spinning-wheels, and even from children in the street. He has not, therefore, a claim to the invention of the stories, but the charm of the style in which he has given them to his countrymen is entirely his own, and will always ensure an immense popularity.

Musæus was the author of other works; "Grandison the Second," a parody on Richardson's celebrated novel, which, at the time of its first publication, was greatly admired by the Germans; "Physiognomical Travels"—the work which first made its author famous,—and some other compositions, which were popular in their day. A sort of literary "Dance of Death" was his last production.

He was called "the good Musæus." To the epithet so bestowed "few have had a better claim than Musæus," says a writer in the "English Encyclopædia of Biography." "A mild philosophy, of which his own life furnished a practical example, together with shrewd good sense and quiet humour, pervades all his writings."

The five "Legends of Number Nip" contained in the present volume, are compiled from a translation of Musæus' works, published in London shortly after his death. It is doubtful whether

the stories then obtained the popularity they deserved on their own merits, as the translator had introduced much that was extraneous, and more that was very objectionable. Those errors have been carefully avoided in the present volume.

MARK LEMON.

LEGENDS OF NUMBER NIP.

LEGEND I.

THE GNOME KING AND THE PRINCESS OF SILESIA.

On the lofty Parnassus of Silesia there dwells, besides Apollo and his nine Muses, the far-famed Elfin Lord of the Mountain, commonly called Number Nip. The Sprite, though he maintains a perfectly good understanding with the deities of song, has contributed more, if one may confess the truth without giving offence, to the celebrity of the Giant Mountains, than the whole vociferous choir of Silesian poets, with their divine patrons into the bargain. This mighty ruler of the gnomes has, however, no extensive territory on the surface of the earth; his domain is but a few miles in

circumference, lying within a single chain of hills: and he shares even this little territory with two potent monarchs, who do not even acknowledge his partnership in power. A few fathoms, however, below the vegetable soil, begins his undisputed sovereign sway, which is not liable to be infringed by any partition treaty: it extends four thousand miles in depth, as far as the very centre of the globe.

Our subterraneous potentate sometimes takes his pleasure in gliding through the strata and rocks which form his spacious dominions; here he surveys his inexhaustible treasures of mineral wealth, summons his troops of gnomes, and assigns to each his proper task: some are bid to curb, by dykes and dams, the furious torrents of subterraneous lava, others are employed to catch mineral streams, and impregnate the barren rock, till it is converted, by the rich metallic damps, into precious ore. The monarch of the abyss, sometimes laying aside the reins of subterranean government, ascends for recreation to the glimpses of the moon, and holds

his court on the summit of the Giant Mountains,* where he sports with the children of men as unfeelingly as a mischievous boy, who diverts himself with tickling his playfellow into convulsions.

Number Nip is shrewd, whimsical and fickle, petulant and rude, proud and vain, and so inconstant, that he will be to-day your warmest friend, and not acknowledge you to-morrow: the distressed have sometimes found him kind, generous, and feeling; but he is at such perpetual variance with himself, that he is frank or reserved, mulish or pliant, almost at the same moment of time.

In days of yore, Number Nip, as he traversed the barren heaths and rugged hills, practised his frolics upon the beasts of the forest or the field; he would sometimes set bears and buffaloes by the ears, or scare whole herds of timorous deer, so that, in their fright, they would tumble headlong down cliffs and precipices. Weary at length of such diversions, he dived into the regions of

* Riesen-ge-bürge, well-known mountains in Germany.

the lower world, and remained in the earth, for several centuries, till he felt a desire to bask himself again in the sun, and survey the works of external creation. But how great was his astonishment when, from his station on the snowy summit of the Giant Mountains, he beheld a total change in the surrounding scenery! The gloom of impenetrable forests had disappeared; they were converted into arable land, over which waved profuse crops of golden grain. From the bosom of blooming orchards he could see the thatched roofs of many a well-peopled village just peeping out, and comfortable wreaths of smoke issuing from the chimneys into the unruffled atmosphere. Here and there, on the brow of a hill, stood a solitary watch-tower, intended for the security of the land; sheep and cattle were pasturing in the flowery meadows below, and melodious sounds proceeded from beneath the refreshing shade of the spreading oaks.

The novelty and repose of the landscape so agreeably affected the lord of the domain, that he

felt no displeasure at those who had presumed to take possession without waiting for his leave; nor had he the least wish to disturb them in their occupations; but, like the good-natured housewife who allows the social swallow, and the twittering sparrow, a lodging under her roof, so the Sprite, in his placid mood, surrendered the territory they had seized. He was even inclined to acquaint himself with their manners and dispositions; and he accordingly assumed the form of a sturdy ploughman, and hired himself to the first farmer he met. Whatever he did prospered under his hand, and Franz (as he was called) the ploughman was soon accounted the best workman in the village; but his master was an idler and drunkard; he squandered away the profits derived from the toil of his faithful labourer, and showed small gratitude for his services. Franz therefore left him, and went to his neighbour, from whom he received the charge of the flock, which he carefully tended, and drove it to distant wilds and (what seemed, to others) inaccessible steeps,

abounding in wholesome herbage. The flock increased and multiplied under its shepherd's care; not a sheep tumbled over the precipice, nor was a lamb ever destroyed by the wolf. But his master was mean and niggardly; instead of rewarding his shepherd as he ought, he himself stole the best wether out of the flock, and stopped part of his man's wages on the plea of negligence; Franz, therefore, quitted the knave, and entered into the judge's service. Here he became the scourge of thieves, and the unwearied promoter of justice; but the judge was an unjust man; he warped the law, and decided according to favour and affection. As Franz disdained to be the instrument of wrong and of oppression, he gave the judge warning to quit his service, and for which he was thrown into prison, whence he easily escaped through the key-hole, the common "way out" for spirits.

This first essay to learn the ways of man could not possibly have the effect of warming his heart to philanthropy; he returned in disgust to the summit of a rock, and, as he surveyed from that

station, the smiling fields, he silently wondered that Mother Earth should thus have lavished her gifts on such an ungrateful brood. He, however, resolved to make one other excursion for the purpose of studying mankind. He now glided invisible into the vale, and lay concealed among the trees and bushes; there, as he kept a sharp look-out, he perceived reposing the form of a damsel, lovely to behold as the Medicean Venus. Grouped around her upon the grass, beside a waterfall that gushed from the rocks, and was received into a natural basin, her companions were sporting and chatting with their mistress in the gaiety of innocence. This scene affected the spirit of the rocks so powerfully, that he was willing once again to share the uncertain lot of humanity. But the essences of spirits are too delicate to be susceptible of any firm and lasting impression, and the Gnome felt that he required a body properly to appreciate the beauty which he saw before him. He therefore transmuted himself into a jet-black raven, but his expedient

did not answer: he beheld everything with the eyes of a raven, and his feelings were those of a raven, and a nest of field-mice had now more attraction for him than the fairest maiden; so he concluded that the soul, in its thoughts and desires, acts in correspondence with the body that encloses it.

This psychological remark was no sooner made than the mistake was corrected; the raven flew into the thicket, and put on the shape of a youth in the prime of life. New sentiments arose in his breast, of which he had never dreamed during all the ages of his existence. An irresistible impulse drew him mechanically towards the group of maidens, and at the same time he felt an equally powerful repugnance to approach them.

The most beautiful object before him was the daughter of the King of Silesia, who then reigned in the neighbourhood of the Giant Mountains: she was wont to frequent the woods and thickets around the palace with her train of attendant maids in search of sweet-scented flowers, or to gather—

such was the frugality of the age—a basket of wild strawberries or mushrooms for her father's table. Often in sultry weather she would seek refreshment in the shade beside the cascade, and play with the cool water in the basin.

When the Princess and her maids had departed, the Gnome came from the thicket and looked after them with feelings new and strange. He felt he could not quit the spot, and he never left it for a moment during the interval between the departure of the Princess and her return, which was not until many days.

At length, one sultry summer's noon, the Princess with her companions sought the cooling shade beside the waterfall. But what was their astonishment on seeing the place entirely changed! the rugged rocks were covered with marble and alabaster; the water no longer dashed in a wild stream from the steep precipice, but descended down a flight of steps, and diffused itself with a gentle murmur into a capacious basin of marble: from the middle of which ascended a jet that

dispersed itself in a shower of large drops, which a gentle breeze scattered about like diamond rain. Daisies, heart's-ease, and forget-me-not, bloomed around the brink; and rosebushes, interwoven with jessamine and woodbine, encircled the retreat. At the back of the cascade appeared the mouth of a grotto, whose sides and arches glistened with many-coloured ores, mountain crystals and spar, all so bright and sparkling that the eye was dazzled as it beheld them.

The Princess was wrapped in silent admiration; she knew not how to believe her eyes, and hesitated whether or not to fly from the enchanted spot. But she was a genuine daughter of mother Eve, and, yielding to temptation, she ventured into the grotto, and tasted of the delicious fruit which seemed to be placed there on purpose for her. As soon as she had gratified her curiosity, and examined every corner of the grotto, she felt an irresistible desire to bathe in the basin; but scarcely had the lovely Princess crossed its smooth margin, than she began to sink, through the

deceitful pebbles that glistened below in a shallow place, so as to remove all suspicion of danger. Before her attendants could seize the auburn locks of their mistress, the treacherous waters swallowed her up, and the affrighted train uttered a loud shriek as the Princess vanished from their sight.

In vain did they wring their snow-white hands —in vain invoke the assistance of the Naiads— in vain run half distracted round the edge of the marble basin ;—they only got a sprinkling from the jet, as if it had been played upon them in sport. No one dared to venture in after her, except her favourite Brinhilda, who did not hesitate to plunge into the bottomless pool, in expectation of sharing the fate of her beloved mistress. But she was borne, like a dry cork, on the surface, nor could she dive into the water notwithstanding all her efforts. There was, therefore, no resource but to carry the doleful tidings to the King. The dejected train met him with sighs and tears, just as he returned from a meeting with his nobles. The monarch rent his robe in sorrow and consternation:

he took the golden diadem from his head, and hid his visage in his purple robe, as he sorrowed aloud for the loss of the beautiful Princess.

As soon as he had paid the first tribute of tears to parental affection, he hastened to the cascade, in order to examine into the cause of the accident. But the charm was gone! all appeared in native wildness; there was neither grotto, nor basin, nor a circle of rose-trees, nor a sprig of jessamine. The King was amazed, but as stranger occurrences had taken place in the Giant Mountains, he soon became reconciled to his loss, trusting that time would restore his daughter.

Meanwhile, the beautiful Princess found herself with her spirit lover, who had conducted her by a subterranean passage to a magnificent palace, that put her father's homely residence to shame. When the spirits of the Princess were recruited, she discovered herself seated on an easy couch, clad in a robe of rose-coloured satin, and girt with a sash of azure-blue silk, that seemed to have been stolen from the wardrobe of the goddess of love. A young

man of engaging countenance lay stretched at her feet, making the warmest avowal of love, which she received with the becoming blush of modesty. The enraptured Gnome gave her an account of his state and origin, described the subterraneous regions that were subject to his sway, conducted her through the apartments of the palace, and showed her all its riches and splendour. A noble lawn surrounded the castle on all sides: the refreshing shade which continually rested on the turf, particularly charmed the Princess; her eye was delighted by the fruit-trees, which bore ruddy gold-streaked apples, and the bushes swarmed with birds of song, whose thousand voices united to perform their native melodies. The look of the admiring spirit by her side was fixed intently upon her face, and his ear greedily drank up the sounds that issued from her rosy mouth, and every word glided into his heart. Such rapturous hours as he now owed to his first love, he had never enjoyed during his life of past ages.

The charming Princess did not sympathise with

his transports; heaviness hung on her brow; that soft melancholy, that melting languor, which gives such bewitching grace to the female form, betrayed some ungratified wish that lay concealed in her heart, some feelings that did not fully correspond with those of her lover. He soon made this discovery, and strove by a thousand caresses to disperse the clouds, and cheer the dejected damsel, but in vain. "Man," he thought, when he found his efforts unavailing, "like the ant and the bee, is a social animal: the beautiful mortal languishes for want of society." He immediately flew to the field, plucked a dozen of turnips, put them in an elegantly woven basket, and presented it to the beautiful Princess, whom he found unconsciously stripping the leaves off a rose.

"Fairest among the daughters of earth, banish all sadness from thy soul; thou shalt no longer remain a lonely mourner in my dwelling! This basket contains everything thou needest to make thy residence agreeable. Take this party-coloured wand, touch the vegetables in this basket,

and they shall assume whatever form thou choosest."

He then quitted the Princess; nor did she delay a moment to follow his instructions. "Brinhilda, my dear Brinhilda," she cried, "appear!"

Instantly Brinhilda was prostrate before her, tenderly embracing her mistress's knees, and bedewing her hand with tears of joy. The deception was so complete, that the Princess was startled at what she saw; she was uncertain whether she had enchanted the true Brinhilda to her presence, or whether her eye was mocked by a phantom. She, nevertheless, gave way to the sensations of joy; she walked arm-in-arm up and down the garden with her best-beloved companion, and then led her through all the apartments of the palace, till they came to her wardrobe, where the female spirit of contemplation found so much employment, that they remained until all the veils, sashes, dresses, ear-rings, and necklaces, were exhibited and tried on. The fictitious Brinhilda conducted herself with such address, and showed

so much taste in the choice and disposition of the female ornaments, that if she was essentially nothing better than a turnip, no one could deny that she was the queen of her race. The watchful Gnome congratulated himself on the penetration which he supposed he had shown in diving into the heart of a woman; nor did he fail to flatter himself with the idea of the progress he had made in the science of man; his beloved now seemed to him more beautiful and interesting than ever.

She, on her part, lost not a moment in animating her whole stock of turnips; with the help of her enchanted wand, she converted nine of them into the semblance of her attendant virgins; and of the remaining two one she formed into a Cyprus cat, and the other into a monkey. She now re-established her court, assigned each maid her portion of work, and never was mistress better served. The whole household anticipated her wishes; a nod was sufficient, and every order was executed without demur. She enjoyed for several weeks the uninterrupted pleasures of society; dances, song,

and music, succeeded each other from morning till night in the Gnome's palace; but at length the Princess remarked that the freshness of her companions' cheeks began to fade. The glass in the marble saloon first forced the observation upon her. She was surprised to find that she alone continued blooming as a rose-bud, while her beloved Brinhilda and the other maidens, were shrunk like so many withered flowers. They nevertheless all assured her they were perfectly well; and although the liberal Gnome profusely supplied his table, yet they visibly decayed; their spirits drooped from day to day, and all the fire of youth was extinguished.

One fine morning, the youthful Princess, refreshed by sleep, tripped lightly into the breakfast parlour; but she recoiled with horror, as a company of helpless old women tottered to salute her! They were supported by crutches, oppressed with asthma and rheumatism, and were unable to hold themselves upright. The monkey, once so frolicsome, lay stretched out stiff upon the ground; and

the coaxing Cyprus cat could scarcely creep along. The Princess ran out of the chamber, frightened at the hideous company, and from the tower over the gateway she called aloud upon the Gnome. He soon, in obedience to the summons, appeared in an humble attitude.

"Malicious Sprite," said she, in an angry tone, "why dost thou envy me the society of the shadows of my former companions—the only consolation of my afflicted life? Is it not enough to be torn from my indulgent parents, that thou shouldst turn this solitude into a lazar-house? Immediately restore health and youth to my maids, or hatred and contempt shall avenge thy audacity."

"Fairest of the daughters of men," replied the Gnome, "let not thy wrath exceed the measure of my offence; whatever lies within the sphere of my power is at thy command, but do not require what is impossible. The forces of Nature are under my control, but her immutable laws deride my efforts. As long as there was any vegetative energy in the turnips, the magic rod could trans-

form the principle of life according to thy will; but their juices are now dried up, and they are upon the eve of dissolution, for the elementary spirit that animated them is fled. This, however, need give thee no concern; another basketful will easily repair the loss. Thou canst again call up every form thou mayest desire. Now, therefore, give back mother Nature her own; they have served thee long enough. Thou wilt find more agreeable companions awaiting thee in the garden."

The Gnome then departed. The Princess took the party-coloured wand, touched her decrepit attendants, and they shrank into withered turnips; and having gathered them up, she did as children tired of a plaything, or princes of a favourite, are wont to do—she threw the rubbish away, and thought no more about it.

She now tripped lightly over the verdant lawn to find the basket, but she could nowhere see it; she walked up and down the garden, looking carefully around, but no basket appeared in view.

At the vine-walk, the Gnome approached her in such evident perplexity, that she could discern his state of mind at the distance they were asunder.

"Thou hast deceived me," said she; "where is the basket? I have been seeking for it this hour in vain."

"Gracious mistress of my heart," replied the spirit, "I have promised more than I can perform. Wilt thou forgive my heedlessness? I have traversed the country in search of turnips, but they have been long gathered. The fields are in mourning; below in the vale, winter reigns uncontrolled. Thy presence alone has enchained spring to these rocks, and compelled flowers to sprout beneath thy footsteps. Have patience only for three changes of the moon; thou shalt then always have puppets at thy command."

Before the Gnome had finished his apology, his mistress had turned away from him in displeasure. She retired to her closet without deigning him a word in reply.

He repaired to the nearest market-town in his

dominions, put on the form of a huckster, bought an ass, and loaded it with seed, with which he sowed a whole acre of ground. He then gave one of his attendant spirits the charge of the field, charging him to kindle a subterraneous fire, and to ripen the plants with a kindly heat.

The turnip field came up finely, and promised a plentiful crop in a short time. He took the Princess daily to view its progress: she found more pleasure in the young turnips than in the golden apples, though these seemed to have been transplanted from the garden of the Hesperides. But wearisomeness and discontent had clouded her azure eyes: and her favourite retreat was a plantation of gloomy firs, beside a brook, that discharged its crystal stream into the valley. The Gnome perceived that in spite of his constant endeavours to gain the heart of the beautiful Princess, no progress was yet made. Nevertheless, his loving perseverance was not to be wearied; he continued to fulfil her wishes in the most punctual manner, hoping at last to win her. His inexperience in love

affairs was such, that he imagined the difficulties he encountered might be an essential part of the romance of earthly love; for he remarked, with great truth and acuteness, that the resistance was not without its secret charm, and that it would infallibly add to the glory of the future triumph. But, as an utter novice in the science of female nature, he had not an idea of the cause that rendered the heart of the sovereign of his affections so impregnable. He supposed it was still as free as his own, and firmly believed the vacant spot was his rightful property, as being the first occupant.

This, however, was a wide mistake. Prince Ratibon, a young neighbour of the King of Sardinia, whose dominions lay on the banks of the Oder, had already won the affection of the Princess. The happy pair were looking fondly forward to the day of the consummation of their mutual vows, when the bride all of a sudden disappeared. On hearing these painful tidings, the love-sick Ratibon quitted his residence, retired to the woods, that he might avoid the hateful face of man, told the tale

of his misery to the rocks, and committed every folly becoming a despairing lover. His faithful Princess, meanwhile immured in her delightful prison, gave vent to her sorrow in sighs; but so closely did she conceal her feelings, that the vigilant and sagacious Gnome was a perfect stranger to her regrets. The Princess had long been considering how she might deceive her enamoured gaoler, so as to escape from her wearisome captivity. After many a sleepless night, she hit upon a scheme that seemed worthy of trial.

The spring was now returning to the valleys of the mountain; the Gnome suffered his subterraneous fire to go out, and the turnips, not having been checked by the frosts of winter, were growing ripe apace. The Princess gathered a few every day, and, for experiment's sake, transmuted them into a variety of forms. The elf supposed it to be mere amusement, but the Princess had other views. One day she transformed a small turnip into a bee, which she instantly dispatched in search of tidings of her beloved Ratibon.

"Fly," she cried, "dear insect, towards the west; find out Ratibon, the prince of the land, and hum gently in his ear that I still live, and live for him; but that I am a slave to the Prince of the Gnomes, who resides on this mountain: lose not a word of this salutation, and bring me back news of my love."

The bee immediately set forward from the finger of its mistress, in obedience to her orders; but it had scarce got upon wing, when a hungry swallow darted at it, and to the great affliction of the young lady, consumed the insect courier to her love with all his dispatches; she then, by the help of the magic wand, created a grasshopper, and instructed it to bear the same message and salutation.

"Hop, little grasshopper, over the mountain, till thou comest to Ratibon, the Prince of the land, and chirp in his ear that I long for emancipation from my bonds by his powerful arm." The grasshopper hopped and fluttered as nimbly as it could, in order to execute its commission; but a long-legged stork happening to cross the road, seized it with its

pointed beak, and instantly buried it in the charnel-house of his capacious craw.

These failures did not discourage the persevering Princess from a new attempt; she bestowed on a third turnip the shape of a magpie: "Fly hence," said she, "loquacious bird, from tree to tree, till thou discoverest Ratibon, my beloved; acquaint him with my imprisonment, and appoint him to wait three days hence at the extremity of the mountain, for the prisoner that dares to break her bonds, and desires his protection."

The party-coloured bird obeyed; she flitted from one resting place to another, and the anxious Princess accompanied her motions as far as the eye could reach. The afflicted Ratibon was still wandering, in his melancholy mood, among the woods; the return of spring, and the revival of nature served but to augment his affliction. He was sitting under a shady oak, brooding over his loss, when a deep-drawn sigh broke forth, and an unknown voice pronounced, "Ratibon!" He listened attentively, but seeing no human figure

near, he concluded it was an illusion of his fancy; when, wonderful! he heard the same sound repeated. He was soon aware of a magpie shifting from bough to bough; and again listening attentively, he heard the bird repeat his name. "Troublesome chatterer!" he exclaimed, "who has taught thee to pronounce the name of a wretch who heartily wishes to be forgotten by all the world?" As he uttered this ejaculation, he took a stone to throw at the bird, but the Prince's arm sunk nerveless to his side.

The speaker on the tree now delivered his message, with the fluency peculiar to the magpie race. No sooner did Ratibon hear the joyful tidings than the clouds of sorrow dispersed; the melancholy that preyed upon him was dissipated; he recovered his powers of thought and reflection; and began to make more particular inquiries concerning the fate of the beautiful Princess. But the messenger, however talkative, could only repeat its lesson mechanically over and over again, and at length away it flew. Ratibon hastened from the

See page 27.

wood, and repaired to his castle, where he equipped a squadron of horse, and set out in loving expectation of what was to happen.

Meanwhile the Princess had prepared everything for the execution of her purpose. She had ceased to mortify the patient Gnome with her coyness; her eye promised hope, and her inflexibility seemed to be giving way. No pining lover would easily suffer such favourable appearances to remain unimproved; and the Gnome, by virtue of his finer nature, was soon sensible of the alteration in the conduct of his hitherto unkind mistress. He soon grew bolder, renewed his protestations of love, which now only met with a bashful refusal. In a short time, however, the preliminaries were as good as signed, and the Princess only requested a day to consider,—a condition which was gladly accepted by the enraptured Gnome.

Soon after sunrise the following morning, the beautiful Princess appeared in the dress of an Eastern bride; she was loaded with all her ornaments; her auburn hair was collected in a knot

and crowned with a myrtle garland; the trimming of her dress sparkled with jewels.

As the Gnome approached her on the great terrace, she modestly covered her face with her veil.

"Angelic maiden," he cried, "uncover thy face, and suffer me to drink love from thy eyes; refuse me no longer the hand that will make me the happiest being upon whom the morning sun ever shed its rays." Here he attempted to obtain a sight of her countenance, eager to read his fate in her eyes. But the Princess concealed her beauty in a thicker cloud of veil, and thus modestly replied—

"How may a mortal deny thee, sovereign of my heart. Thy perseverance has prevailed. Receive the confession from my lips; but let me hide my blushes and my tears."

"Wherefore tears, my beloved?" said the Gnome. "Every tear of thine falls like burning lava on my heart. I desire love for love and not sacrifice."

"Alas!" returned the Princess. "Why dost thou misinterpret my tears? My heart returns thy tenderness; but it is nevertheless distracted by gloomy forebodings. Thou never changest, whereas all earthly beauty is only a flower that fades. How shall I be sure, that after our union thou wilt continue the tenderness and affection which have distinguished our courtship?" "Demand," he replied, "some proof of my faithfulness, and of my eagerness to fulfil thy commands; set my patience to the test, and judge by that of the violence of my unalterable love."

"So it shall be," concluded the bewitching girl. "I require this proof of thy compliance; go immediately, and number all the turnips in the field; my marriage shall not be celebrated without witnesses. I will animate them all, and they shall attend as the bridal train. But beware of deceiving me, and see thou dost not miscount by a single turnip, for that is the test by which I will judge of thy truth."

However unwilling the Gnome might feel to quit his lovely bride, he yet obeyed without hesitation. He immediately set about his task, and soon finished the calculation, but to make certain of his correctness, he went over the operation a second time, and, to his sore vexation, discovered a difference, that obliged him to count the turnips a third time. Another variation! a circumstance which casts no imputation upon the Gnome's arithmetical acquisitions, for the thought of a lovely Princess may easily confuse the clearest head.

The crafty Princess had no sooner lost sight of her admirer, than she made preparation for her flight. She had a juicy, well fed turnip in readiness, which, by help of the magic wand, she immediately converted into a fiery steed, properly accoutred. She hastily mounted, and rapidly traversed the heaths and wilds of the mountain, and soon reached the place of rendezvous, where she found her beloved Ratibon anxiously expecting her arrival; and her maiden reserve was so overpowered

between joy for her escape and the ardour of affection, that she did not hesitate to rush into his arms.

At last the Gnome succeeded in ascertaining the real number of turnips in the field, large and small. He now hastened joyfully back to the mistress of his heart, in order to convince her, by this punctual performance of her commands, that he should prove the most complaisant and devoted of husbands. He entered the garden with great self-complacency, but did not find her whom he was seeking; he traversed all the covered walks and alleys, but in neither did he meet with the object of his search; he hurried to the palace, examined every part, called upon the beloved name of the Princess, which was echoed only by the lonely apartments; he begged but one word from her charming lips, but there came no answer back. This alarmed him; he began to suspect foul play; he immediately threw aside the cumbersome investment of his body, and mounted high in the air, and saw the beloved fugitive afar off, at the

moment her nimble steed was crossing the confines of his territory. The enraged sprite hastily seized a couple of clouds that were sailing peaceably along, rolled them up into a ball, and hurled it, in the form of a dreadful thunderbolt, after the fugitive. The bolt split an oak that had grown upon the border for a thousand years; but beyond this, his rage was impotent, and the fire was seen to be dissipated in harmless vapour.

He now rose into the upper regions of the air, and in his despair, uttering complaints to the winds of heaven! When he had given vent to his furious passion, he returned spiritless and dejected to his palace, glided through every chamber, and filled it with sighs and lamentations. He afterwards visited his pleasure-grounds once more; but the magic creation had no longer any charms for him: a single footstep of his faithless mistress, which he found upon the sand, occupied his attention more than all the glories of his own creation. Every spot where she had walked or

rested, awakened the image of some past pleasure; every shrub from which she had plucked a flower, tortured him with bitter recollections. After he had thus duly solemnised the funeral rites of his first love, he proudly resolved to abandon the study of mankind, and, stamping thrice upon the ground, the enchanted palace, with all its glory, disappeared. An abyss opened its capacious jaws, and the Gnome darted down into the deep, nor did he stop till he arrived at the centre of the earth. the opposite boundary of his realms, whither he carried malevolence, and a rooted aversion to mankind.

During this catastrophe in the mountain, Prince Ratibon was more agreeably employed in conveying the rescued one to a place of safety. He bore the lovely Princess with great triumph back to her father's palace, where the youthful pair were soon afterwards united. The Prince shared with his bride his hereditary throne: and he built a city, to which he gave his name, and which is so called even unto this day. The strange and extraordi-

nary adventure of the Princess, her resolution, and fortunate escape, became the tale of the country round, and it has been handed down from generation to generation.

LEGEND II.

THE GNOME AND THE TAILOR.

After his loss of the fair Princess, Number Nip left the world with a resolution never more to behold the light of day; but the lenient hand of time by degrees obliterated the traces of sorrow: although the operation required no less than nine hundred and ninety-nine years, so slowly did the wounds of his heart heal. At length, being in a very listless mood, and oppressed by ennui, his favourite Gnome, the court buffoon, proposed a party of pleasure to the Giant Mountains. The proposition was readily accepted by Number Nip, and it required not above a minute of time to perform the distant journey. The lord of mines and metals found himself on the site of his once verdant lawn, and to which he restored its ancient

form, though it still remained invisible to mortal eyes. The traveller, who missed his way as he crossed the mountain, perceived only a frightful wilderness.

The sight of the objects he had beheld during the period of his love, recalled all that he had hoped and suffered for the beautiful Princess, until he could no longer conceal his anger and hatred of the human race. It seemed to him as if the affair of the beautiful Princess had happened but yesterday: her image was as distinct in his mind as if she stood at that instant before him; but the recollection of the manner in which she had outwitted him revived his anger against the whole race of man. "Vile earthworms!" he cried, as he lifted up his eyes, and beheld from the lofty pinnacle of the rock the spires of churches and cloisters rising from the bosom of many a city; "Ye still crawl, I see, in the vale below. Your craft and cunning has once made a mock of me; now ye shall pay for your triumph; I will pinch and plague until ye quake at the mention of the Mountain Spirit."

He had scarce uttered these words, when his ear caught the sound of human voices at a distance. Three young men were chatting as they crossed the mountain, the boldest of them crying out incessantly—"Number Nip, come down! Number Nip, thou thief, that stealest helpless girls!"

The chroniclers had faithfully preserved the love affair of the spirit; and as it had passed from mouth to mouth, it had gained, as is usually the case, a number of false additions, and every traveller that passed the mountain entertained his fellow with the particulars. A thousand stories of apparitions had been invented, to the great terror and dismay of the faint-hearted wanderer, though they were totally groundless. It had never been known that any of these insults had been revenged by the patient and long-suffering spirit; and no wonder, for he could not hear a word of them in the depths of the earth where he held his court. He was now the more struck at hearing the tale of his love so comprehensively repeated; and down he came roaring like a whirlwind through the gloomy forest of firs, with

a full intention to strangle the poor wretch on the spot, for making so free with his history, though uttered without any design to give offence; but he seasonably bethought himself that so exemplary and open a correction would raise a great alarm and outcry in the country, which might deter travellers from passing the mountain, whereby he would lose all opportunity of obtaining his projected revenge upon mankind. He therefore suffered the insolent bawler and his companions to pass quietly along for the present, resolved, however, not to allow him to call upon him in vain.

At the next cross-road the story-teller parted from his messmates, and for this time arrived at Hirschberg with a sound skin; but an invisible attendant followed him to his inn, that he might know where to find him in due season.

Number Nip returned to the mountain, thinking all the while upon the means of gratifying his revenge. On the road he chanced to meet a rich Israelite, travelling also towards Hirschberg, whom he immediately determined to employ as the in-

strument of his vengeance. Number Nip therefore joined the Jew in the shape of the young man that had insulted him, and entered into a friendly conversation with the stranger, at the same time leading him astray. When they were at last in the depth of the thicket, the Jew was alarmed by his companion seizing him by the beard, and then, after tying his hands and feet, robbing him of a purse full of gold and jewels. Having, moreover, by way of a farewell benediction, bestowed a shower of blows and kicks upon him.

When the Jew had a little recovered from his fright, he began to call aloud for help, for he was afraid of being starved to death in that remote wilderness. His outcries soon brought to the spot where he lay, a respectable, grave-looking personage, in appearance a burgess of one of the neighbouring towns, and who, having inquired into the cause of his distress and how he came so far out of the road, kindly took the cords from his hands and feet, and performed all the offices of humanity, which the good Samaritan showed to the man who had fallen

among thieves. He recruited his spirits with an exhilarating cordial, which he, by good luck, happened to have in his pocket, and accompanied him back to the door of the inn at Hirschberg; where, after giving him a piece of money for his immediate necessities, he took his leave. How was the Jew thunderstruck at seeing, on his entrance, the very ruffian who had robbed and bound him sitting at table in the kitchen, as cool and unconcerned as if his conscience had been burdened with no crime! He had before him a flask of the country wine, and was cracking his jokes with a set of jovial companions; beside him lay the very wallet in which he had seen his purse stowed. The astonished descendant of Abraham was doubtful at first whether he should trust his eyes. He thought he could not possibly have mistaken the person, so he passed out unobserved at the door, and carried his information straight to the bailiff of the town.

The Hirschberg corporation had, in those days, the character of administering justice speedily, and the beadles having well armed themselves with

prongs and clubs, surrounded the inn, seized the innocent culprit, and carried him before the mayor of the town.

"Who art thou?" demanded the magistrate; "and whence comest thou?"

The young man answered openly and unterrified —"I am an honest tailor by trade; my name is Benedick; I come from Liebenaw, and work journey-work here for my master."

"Hast thou not fallen upon this Jew in the wood with a design to murder him? didst thou not maltreat him and take his purse?"

"I never beheld this Jew with my eyes before; I have neither struck, nor bound, nor robbed him of his purse; I am an honest handicraftsman, and no highway robber."

"How canst thou prove thy honesty?"

"By the contents of my wallet, and the testimony of my clear conscience."

"Open the wallet, and let us see what it contains."

Benedick set about opening his package in great confidence, being well assured that it contained

nothing but his own honestly acquired property. But as he was turning over his linen, behold, something jingled like gold. The beadles immediately commenced a search, and drew forth a heavy purse, which the overjoyed Jew claimed as his property. The poor culprit was thunderstruck at the discovery: he was ready to drop down with fear; he turned pale; his lips quivered; his knees trembled; and he was unable to utter a word in his defence.

"How now, villain!" cried the magistrate, "hast thou still confidence to deny the robbery?"

"Mercy! good Mr. Mayor," cried the weeping criminal, as he dropped on his knees and lifted up his hands; "I call all the saints in heaven to witness that I am innocent of the robbery."

"All denial is now vain—thou art clearly convicted," proceeded the mayor; "the purse is sufficient proof of thy guilt: therefore freely confess before the rack comes to extort an acknowledgment of thy crime."

Benedick, quite overpowered by these suspicious circumstances, could only make protestations of

his innocence: but he spoke to the deaf; he was set down for a hardened ragamuffin, that wanted but to swear his neck out of the halter. The inquisitorial machinery was called in to persuade him, by the rhetoric of iron arguments, to confess away his own life. At the terrible appearance of the new orator, the calmness proceeding from his purity of conscience deserted the poor tailor: he started back at the idea of the sufferings that awaited him. As the officer was going to fix the thumb-screws, having considered that the operation would render him ever afterwards unfit to ply the needle with any credit, he thought it better to avoid the pain altogether, and rather than be a ruined man for life, to confess to a crime of which he was innocent. The trial was brought to a speedy issue, the convict was unanimously sentenced, without prorogation of the court, to be hanged; and, to keep up the credit of a speedy administration of justice, as well as for the sake of saving the cost of maintenance, the sentence was ordered to be executed early the next morning.

The crowd of spectators all applauded the sentence of the court as just and upright; yet none were observed to commend the integrity of the judge so loudly as the tender-hearted Samaritan, who had forced his way among the rest into court. He could not sufficiently express his admiration of the love of justice which distinguished the worshipful mayor of Hirschberg. In fact, no one was more interested in the issue of the affair than this same philanthropist, for it was he whose invisible hand stuffed the Jew's purse into the tailor's knapsack, and was, in fact, no other than Number Nip himself. Early next morning he perched in the form of a raven on the gallows, in expectation of the cart that was to convey thither the victim of his vengeance—but for this time he waited for his prey in vain. A pious friend found the prisoner so ignorant of religious matters, that he solicited a respite of three days, and obtained it, though not without great difficulty. Number Nip hearing of this delay, flew away to his mountain, there to abide the term of the respite.

During the interval, he amused himself by traversing his woods according to custom. In one of his excursions, he espied a young maiden sitting under a spreading beech. From time to time she wiped away a tear that stole down her cheek, and deep sighs issued from her heaving bosom. The Gnome had formerly felt the powerful influence of a maiden's tears ; he was again so touched by them as to make the first deviation from his determination to plague every descendant of Adam, whose ill-fortune should lead him to cross the mountain ; he even acknowledged the sentiment of compassion to be a kindly feeling, and was irresistibly bent upon consoling the afflicted beauty. He put on the appearance of a reputable burgher, and advancing towards her, inquired—

" Why art thou sitting here alone, my girl, in this melancholy mood ? Do not hide the occasion of thy sorrow from me, that I may consider if there be any method of relieving it."

The maiden, who had been quite absorbed in grief, started on hearing a voice so near her, and

lifted up her downcast face. Ah! what a lovely pair of blue eyes peeped from under her hat! In each a bright tear-drop sparkled like a diamond, but the face was expressive of the deepest affliction. Seeing that it was a respectable-looking person who addressed her, she said—

"Why should you trouble yourself to inquire about my sorrow, good sir, since there is no help for me? I am an unhappy, guilty girl, no better than a murderess; for have I not murdered the man of my heart? But I will never cease to mourn my fault; sighs and tears shall be my portion, till death ends my grief."

The grave personage looked amazement.

"Thou a murderess! with that heavenly face! Impossible! Mankind are, indeed, capable of all deceit and wickedness, that I well know: but here I am puzzled."

"I will solve the riddle," returned the afflicted maiden, "if you have any desire to hear an explanation."

"Say on."

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"I had for a playfellow, from my youth up, the son of a virtuous widow, my neighbour. He chose me for his sweetheart as he grew older—he was so good and kind, so honest and faithful, loved me so constantly and dearly, that he stole away my heart, and I vowed everlasting fidelity to him. Alas! I have made him forget the good lessons of his virtuous mother, and induced him to commit a deed, for which he has forfeited his life to the law!"

"Thou!" cried the Gnome, emphatically.

"Yes, sir, I am his murderess! I instigated him to commit a robbery: he plundered a poor Jew; the gentlemen of Hirschberg have apprehended, convicted, and condemned him; and to-morrow, alas! he is to suffer."

"And hast thou been guilty of this crime?" cried the astonished Sprite.

"Yes, sir, I feel his young blood is upon my head."

"How so?"

"He went to seek for work beyond the

mountain; at setting out, as he had his arms clasped round my neck, and was bidding me farewell, 'My dearest girl,' he said, 'remember and be true to me; when the apples are in blossom, the third season from this, and the swallow is loaded with a burden of straws for her nest, expect me back to fetch thee home, that I may make thee my bride,'—and such I promised him to be by a solemn oath. Now, when the apples were in blossom, and the swallow was building her nest the third time, back came Benedick, to remind me of my promise, and make me his wedded bride. But I laughed and jeered at him, as heedless girls often do. 'Thy wife,' I said, 'I cannot be; thou hast neither roof nor hearth; get thyself first some sterling crowns, and then come and ask again.' The poor young man's heart shrunk within him at this speech. 'Ah! Kristine,' said he, sighing deeply, while the tears stood in his eyes, 'doth thy heart lust after wealth and riches? then thou art no longer a sincere and loving girl. Didst thou not strike the bargain in my hand the time thou

sworest to be true to me? and what had I more than that selfsame hand to maintain thee? whence come thy pride and scorn? Ah! Kristine, I understand thee. Some richer rival hath stolen away thy heart from me. Is it thus thou repayest me, faithless girl? For those three years have I lived in hopes that a good day would come. I counted every hour till the moment I set out to fetch thee home. How light and nimble did love and joy make my feet as I crossed the mountains! and now thou dost scorn me!' He begged and prayed, but I remained obdurate. 'My heart doth not scorn thee, Benedick, I only withhold my hand for the present. Go abroad, get money, then come back, and I will share thy lot with thee, with all my heart.' 'If such be thy resolution,' replied he, 'I will go again into the wide world, where I will beg, and hoard; and never shalt thou see me again till I have the dross with which I am to buy thee. Farewell! I go: adieu!' In this manner did I torture my poor Benedick. He went away in great vexation; then his good angel forsook him,

and he did a deed that was not right, and which his heart surely abhorred."

At this recital the venerable person shook his head in great apparent concern; and, after a considerable pause, exclaimed, with a thoughtful countenance—

"Surprising, this!" He then turned towards the young woman—"But why," said he, "dost thou fill the lonely wood with thy lamentation, which can neither help thee nor thy sweetheart?"

"I was on my way to Hirschberg: as I was going along sorrow fell heavy upon my heart, so I stopped under this tree."

"And what wilt thou do at Hirschberg?"

"I will cast myself at the judge's feet, fill the streets with my outcries, and pray the daughters of the town to entreat mercy. The magistrates may take pity upon the innocent, and spare his life; but, if I do not succeed in saving my lover from a shameful death, I will cheerfully die with him." The Sprite was so moved at this speech, that he renounced all thoughts of vengeance from that

moment, and determined to restore her guiltless lover.

"Dry up thy tears," said he, in a sympathising voice, "and let thy sorrow pass away. Thy lover shall be as free as the birds of the air before the sun goes down. Listen, and be attentive. To-morrow at the first crowing of the cock, when thou hearest a tapping at thy window, make haste, open the chamber door, for it will be Benedick that knocks. Take care that thou dost not make him mad again by thy caprice. Know, also, that it was not he who committed the crime of which thou supposest him guilty; nor can any blame be imputed to thee, for he did not suffer himself to be instigated by thy capriciousness to this evil deed."

The girl, in astonishment at this information, looked her comforter full in the face, and not being able to discern any trace of deceit, she placed confidence in his words. "Good sir, if you be not mocking me," she said, "and it be even as you say, you must be either a seer, or my sweetheart's good angel."

"His good angel!" returned the Gnome, a good deal disconcerted at the idea; "no, in truth, that I am not! but his good friend I will be, as thou shalt find. I am a burgher of Hirschberg; when the poor criminal was condemned I sat at council; but his innocence has since been brought to light; fear not for his safety, I will go and take off his fetters, for I have much authority in the town. Be of good cheer, therefore, and return home in peace."

The damsel arose and obeyed, though fear and hope still struggled in her bosom.

During the three days of respite, the good father had wrestled hard to bring the delinquent into a proper frame of mind; and (as he thought) for the last time, bade him good-night. As the friar was going out at the gaol door, Number Nip in an invisible form met him. He had not yet fixed upon any plan for emancipating the criminal, but on that instant a scheme exactly suited to his taste suggested itself. He slipped after the friar into the monastery, took a gown out of the wardrobe, and proceeded in the similitude of the good Brother to

the prison, which was respectfully opened to him by the keeper.

"I have returned," said Number Nip, "to ask thee, my son, if thou hast any commands for Kristine?" Benedick was confounded at his sweetheart's name; the thoughts of her which he had conscientiously been labouring to stifle, revived with so much vehemence, that he began to sob aloud without being able to utter a single syllable in reply. This heart-breaking scene affected the compassionate priest so much that he resolved to finish it abruptly:

"Poor Benedick," said he, "cease thy sorrow, thou shalt not die: I have learned that thou art, indeed, innocent of the robbery, and that thou hast not defiled thy conscience with any crime; I am therefore come to break thy bonds, and release thee out of prison." Then drawing a key out of his pocket—"Let us see if it will fit." The experiment succeeded: the unfettered Benedick stood at liberty before him—the irons fell from his hands and feet. Then the benevolent priest exchanged

clothes with him, and said, "Go quietly out, imitate the reverend pace of a monk as thou passest by the sentinel, and along the streets; but when thou hast passed Weichbild, step briskly forward to the mountains; and see thou dost not stop to fetch breath till thou standest before Kristine's door in Liebenaw. There tap gently at the window; thy repentant Kristine is waiting for thee!"

The good Benedick, conceiving all that passed to be a dream, rubbed his eyes, pinched his arms and legs, in order to be satisfied whether he was awake; and when convinced there was no illusion, he dropped down at his deliverer's feet, and clasped his knees, trying to stammer out his thanks; but such was his ecstasy of joy that his tongue refused its office. The benevolent priest at length thrust him out by main force, and gave him, moreover, a crust of bread and a black pudding to eat by the way.

During these transactions Kristine was sitting alone in her chamber, listening to every breeze,

and trembling at the tread of every foot that passed. She often imagined something stirred at the window-shutter, or that the bell at the door jingled; she leaped up twenty times, and looked with a palpitating heart through the latch-hole—but it was fancy. The neighbouring cocks were already uttering their first cry to proclaim the dawning day. The bell at the monastery was ringing for matins; but to her the sound was as a passing bell. The watchman had blown his horn for the last time, and called the snoring bake-house maids to their early task. Kristine's lamp burned dim for want of oil, her apprehensions were increasing every instant, so that she overlooked the favourable omen of a rose which had gathered at the top of the glimmering wick. She was seated on her bed-side, weeping and sighing bitterly, "Benedick, Benedick! ah, what a sorrowful day is now dawning!" She ran precipitately to the window; but alas! the sky towards Hirschberg was blood-red; except where dark clouds hung over the horizon like so many shrouds. Her spirits

shrunk back at this ominous prospect; she fell down helpless on the floor, and a deadly silence prevailed around her.

Then there came three gentle taps against her window. A thrill of joy ran through her frame at these sounds. Up she sprang, uttering a loud cry. Then a voice whispered through the key-hole—"Sweetheart! Kristine, my love! art thou awake?" She darted like an arrow to the door.

"Ah, Benedick! is it thou?"

But seeing a priest enter instead of Benedick, she sank back, and swooned away. Benedick flung his arm around her; and a kiss of love soon brought her to her senses.

And then Benedick began to relate his wonderful deliverance out of the dreary dungeon: but his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth from thirst and weariness. Kristine went for a draught of fresh water; and when he had quenched his thirst, he felt hungry. She had nothing to offer him but salt and bread. But Benedick bethought him of his black pudding. As he drew it out

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of his pocket, he secretly wondered at its prodigious weight, for it was heavier than a horse-shoe. As he broke it asunder, behold! a shower of gold tumbled out; whereupon a shuddering fit seized Kristine, as she feared it was part of the Jew's plunder. But the guileless journeyman protested that it was not so, and thought, probably, the pious Friar had secretly lent him the sum for a marriage portion.

Kristine believed his words, and then gratefully blessed their generous benefactor. They quitted their native town, and journeyed to Prague, where Benedick lived long and happily with his wife, as a reputable tradesman, and was blessed with a numerous progeny.

Early on the same morning that Kristine heard with trembling joy her sweetheart tapping at her window, a knocking was also heard at the door of the prison in Hirschberg. It was the Friar, who having been kept awake by his zeal, could hardly wait for the break of day. Number Nip, having once taken up the part of the delinquent was

determined to act it out for the honour of the Hirschberg judicature. He seemed well prepared to die, which gave the holy monk great satisfaction.

The criminal was carted to the place of execution, and submitted peaceably to all the formalities of the ceremony. Next morning nothing was found but a wisp of straw covered with old rags, just like a mawkin suspended among peas to scare away the sparrows. This discovery excited great astonishment among the authorities of Hirschberg; they, however, had the man of straw quietly taken down; and reported that a high wind in the night had wafted the slender tailor away from the gallows.

LEGEND III.

THE GNOME AND HIS DEBTOR.

THE mischief practised by Number Nip was often the result of mere wantonness, giving himself little concern whether the object of his attack was a knave or an honest man. He would frequently join company with a solitary traveller and offer to show him the road, and when he had led his companion far astray, he would vanish, and leave the stranger aghast on the edge of a precipice, or entangled in brushwood. He would sometimes terrify the timorous market-women, by appearing in the shape of some fanciful animal. The fabulous beast called the Rysow, and resembling the leopard, that has sometimes been seen in the Giant Mountains, is but a phantom of Number Nip. He has often been known to lame a horse, break a

waggon-wheel or axle-tree, or roll the fragment of a huge rock, before the eyes of the driver, into a hollow way, just as the team entered it, on purpose to give the poor fellow the labour of removing it before he could proceed. An invisible hand has often held an empty waggon so fast, that six sturdy horses could not move it. If the waggoner gave any intimation that it was a trick of Number Nip's, or broke out into any invective against the mountain sprite, he had to expect a shower of stones, or a liberal drubbing.

But though it was easy to offend Number Nip, it was not very difficult to please him.

A litigious neighbour had forced a poor countryman in the hundred of Riechenberg, to spend all his goods and chattels upon a law-suit. The clutches of the law having seized upon his last cow, he had left only a broken-hearted wife, and half-a-dozen small children. He had indeed still remaining a pair of lusty arms, but they were not sufficient for the maintenance of his family. It touched him to the heart when the young ravens

called for food, and he had nothing to satisfy their hunger.

"A hundred dollars," said he to his wife in their distress, "would set us up again, and we might establish our household at a distance from this vexatious neighbour. You have rich relations on the other side of the mountain; I'll go and lay our piteous case before them: one of them, perhaps, will have compassion, and kindly lend us upon interest what money we want." His disconsolate wife agreed to the proposal, with faint hopes of a favourable issue; but she knew of no better scheme. The husband rose betimes, and as he quitted his wife and children, he bade them be of good cheer: "My heart tells me I shall find a benefactor who will help us more than the lawyers, to whom I have made so many vain journeys." So saying, he put a crust in his pocket for provision by the way, and set forward on his journey. Towards night he arrived, weary and footsore, at the village where the rich relations lived — but none would own him, none would

lodge him. He told his tale and shed tears; but the hard-hearted misers cared not for his affliction, and mocked his distress with harsh reproaches and insolent proverbs—"Pride will have a fall," said one: "Every one forges his own fortune," said another. In this manner did they insult the poor man's distress; and at last fairly thrust him out at the door, calling him an idler and a spendthrift. The unfortunate Franz was not prepared for such a reception from the rich relations of his wife; he slunk silent and sorrowful out of the village, and as he had no money to procure a lodging at the inn, he was forced to lie under a haystack in the open field, where he waited without rest for the lingering dawn to light him on his way. By the time he had reached the mountain, the hand of trouble and affliction pressed so hard upon him, that he was near sinking into absolute despair. "Two days' wages lost!" thought he to himself, weary in body, and faint with hunger, without hope or comfort in his mind—"When you get home, and your six poor

famished darlings come running to you, lifting up their little hands for food, and you must offer them a stone instead of a morsel of bread! Heart of a father, how can it endure this? Burst asunder, dear heart, before you feel this uttermost distress!" In his agitation of mind a thousand abortive schemes suggested themselves to the inconsolable countryman; he at last fell upon the idea of having recourse in his distress to the spirit of the mountain. He had heard a number of romantic stories concerning him—how it was his practice to plague weary travellers, frequently doing them essential injury; but sometimes showing them kindness and favour. He knew that the Spirit never suffered himself to be called by his nickname with impunity; however, he could not tell by what other to invoke him; he therefore resolved to risk a pummelling, and bawled amain—"Number Nip! Number Nip!"

Immediately at the call appeared the figure of a sooty collier, with a beard as red as a fox's tail, hanging down to his middle: he had large fiery

eyes, and in his hand he held a pole like a weaver's beam, which he raised with a design to crush the insolent bawler. "Great Spirit, stop one moment," cried Franz, "if I have not given you your right title I am sorry for it, pray forgive me; only listen a moment, and then use your pleasure." This bold address, and the sorrowful countenance of the man, which betokened neither insolence nor impertinent curiosity, somewhat appeased the Gnome's rage; "Earthworm," said he, "what impels you to disturb my repose? Know that your wretched carcase must pay for this temerity." "Sir," replied Franz, "necessity drives me to you, I have a small favour to ask, which you can easily grant. Pray lend me a hundred dollars: as I am an honest man, I'll return them in three years, with lawful interest." "Am I an usurer," returned the spirit, "that I should lend money upon interest? Go to your brethren and borrow what you need, but let me alone." "Alas!" cried Franz, "with brotherhood among men it is all over: no kindred is acknowledged when a man is in poverty." There-

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upon he told his history at length, and the picture of his wretchedness was so moving, that the Gnome could not refuse his request. Had the poor man been less deserving of compassion, the notion of borrowing money of him appeared so new and singular, that he was inclined, merely on account of the confidence he placed in him, to close with the proposals.

"Come, follow me," said he; which Franz did far through the wood, till they came to a retired valley, overlooked by a bold precipice, thick beset with bushes, and at whose foot was the mouth of a dark cavern. The heart of Franz sank within him, while he groped his way along; one cold fit succeeded another, and his hair stood on end. "Number Nip has misled many a man," thought he; "who knows what precipice lies before me, down which I shall topple at the next step?" Then he heard the fearful roar as of waters tumbling headlong into a deep pit. The further he went, the more his heart was overwhelmed with terror and apprehension. But he was soon,

to his great joy, aware of a blue flame dancing before them: the vault immediately expanded into a spacious apartment; the flame burned brightly, and now appeared to be suspended from the centre of the dome. On the floor he was struck with the sight of a large copper full of bright dollars up to the very brim. At this sight all his fear vanished, and his heart bounded for joy. "Take," said the spirit, "what you require, only draw me up a note of hand for the sum, if you can write." The borrower scrupulously counted out one hundred dollars and no more. The spirit appeared to pay no regard to the business of counting, but turned aside, and went away in quest of materials for writing. Franz wrote the note of hand in as binding terms as he could. The Gnome locked it up in an iron box, and said, by way of farewell, "Now, go your way, my friend, and make an industrious use of the money; do not forget that you are my debtor; but take good notice of the entrance into this valley, and the cleft in the rock. On the expiration of the third year you are to pay

me the capital with interest; I am a rigid creditor: if you do not keep your word, I shall demand my due very rudely." Franz promised to be punctual to the day, and gave him his honest hand upon the bargain. He then parted from his creditor with a grateful heart, and easily found his way out of the cavern.

The hundred pieces had such a mighty effect upon his body and mind, that he felt upon coming into broad day-light, as if he had inhaled new life in the cavern. He strode along to his home full of joy, and strengthened in every limb. The day had begun to fall before he stepped into his wretched hut. As soon as the hungry children espied him, they cried out with one voice— "Bread! father, a bit of bread! We are ready to faint with hunger, you have let us starve so long." His downcast wife sat in a corner, weeping, and fearing the worst, as the faint-hearted are wont to do. She expected her husband would begin a mournful story; but he cheerfully shook her by the hand, and bid her kindle a fire upon the hearth-

stone, "For I have brought," added he, "a peck of oatmeal from Reichenbach in my wallet, with which you shall make a hasty-pudding, stiff enough for a spoon to stand upright in."

He then gave her an account of the good success of his undertaking. "Your relations," said he, "are good kind of people; they did not refuse to acknowledge me—never once threw my poverty in my teeth, nor offered to thrust me rudely out of the door: they entertained me like a prince with open heart and hand; and, what is the best part of the story, counted out the hundred dollars at once upon the table before me."

Then rolled a heavy weight from off the good woman's heart, where it had lain long. "Ay," said she, "had we gone at once to the right smith, we might have saved ourselves a deal of trouble." She then fell to boast of her kindred, on whom she had before placed as little reliance, and was quite elated at the thought of the generosity of their rich relations. The husband, after what she had undergone, gladly left her in a mistake so pleasing

to her vanity. However, as she harped upon the same string day after day, Franz grew tired of the tune, and said to her, "Do you know, when I had found out the right shop, what an excellent lesson the master smith gave me?"

"No," she replied; "how should I? What was it?"

"Why, every man, he told me, forged his own fortune; and you must strike while the iron is hot; therefore, let us now bestir ourselves, and mind our business, that we may get enough in three years to pay capital and interest, and so be easy and out of debt."

He soon afterwards purchased a patch of ground for the plough, and another for hay, and then another and another, and at length a whole hide of land: there was a blessing attending Number Nip's gold, as though there had been a decoy dollar among the hundred. Franz sowed and reaped, and began to be acknowledged a thriving man in the village. The third spring he took a large farm, in addition to his hide of land, and

this brought him in great profit: he was, in short, a man with whom every undertaking prospered.

The time of payment now approached, and Franz had saved so much that he could take up his note without inconvenience. On the appointed day he rose early, and having carefully counted out the sum, waked his wife and all the children, and bade them wash themselves clean, comb their hair, and put on their Sunday clothes, also their new shoes and new scarlet bibs and waistcoats. He himself fetched his Sabbath-day coat, and called from the window to Jan to put the horses to.

"What ails you, father?" asked his wife; "to-day is neither saint's day nor holiday—what makes you in such good humour? What is the meaning of all this that you have prepared, and where do you mean to take us?"

"To visit the rich relations beyond the mountains, and to pay the creditor who helped me up again in the world his interest and principal, for this is the pay-day."

Margaret was right glad to hear this. She dressed herself and the children in all their finery; and that the rich relations might have a good reason to own and not be ashamed of her, she tied a necklace of crooked ducats round her own neck. Franz took his weighty purse, and when everything was ready, mounted with his wife and children on the waggon. Jan smacked his whip, and the four horses stepped briskly forward over the level towards the Giant Mountains. Just before they came to a steep hollow way, the master made the waggon halt, got down, and told the rest to do the same. He then said to his man—

"Jan, drive quietly up the steep; above at the three oaks you can wait for us; and if we tarry awhile, do not be impatient, but let the horses take a mouthful of grass. I know a footpath hereabouts; it is a little round, but very pleasant—we will walk."

He then went straight forward into the wood, attended by his family. The bushes were very thick, and Margaret, seeing her husband look

about here and there, thought he had missed his way, and advised him to turn back and follow the high road. But he stopped of a sudden, made his six children form a ring round him, and said—

"You fancy, my dear Margaret, that we are going to your relations, but that is not my design at present. Your rich friends are pitiless, hard-hearted misers. When I went formerly in my distress, to seek assistance from them, they insulted and drove me haughtily from their doors. Here lives the rich relation to whom we are indebted for our good circumstances, and who, on my note of hand, lent me the money that has multiplied so fast with me. He appointed me to come hither this day, to pay up interest and principal. Can you now guess who our creditor is? It is no other than the Lord of the Hill, nicknamed Number Nip."

At this speech the good woman was violently alarmed; she crossed herself; the children trembled and nestled close together, for fear their father should take them to Number Nip. They had

heard of many fearful accounts of him in long winter nights; how he was a hideous giant and a cannibal, eating men up alive. Franz related the whole of his adventure, in what manner, at his call, the spirit had appeared to him in the shape of a collier, and the rest of the transactions in the cavern. He praised his beneficence with a thankful heart; and so deep-felt was his sense of gratitude, that the tears rolled apace down his sun-burnt cheeks. "Wait here," he concluded, "and I will go into the cave to finish my business. Fear nothing; I shall not be long gone, and if I can obtain the favour, I will bring the Lord of the Hill to see you. Do not be afraid, children, of taking him kindly by the hand, though it should be black and sooty; he will do nothing to hurt you, but will rejoice at the good effects of his own kind deed, and receive your thanks with pleasure."

Though the timid wife had much to object against Franz entering the cavern, and the children cried and screamed unmercifully, collecting themselves in a body round their father, and laying hold

of his skirts as he passed by them, he tore himself away by force, and arrived at the well-known rock. He recognised all the marks of the place, which he had so well fixed in his memory: the old half-decayed oak, at whose root was the mouth of the cavern, stood just as it had stood three years before; but of the hole not a trace was to be seen. Franz tried every method to gain admittance into the rock; he lifted up a stone and knocked aloud, imagining it would be opened; he drew out the heavy purse of gold, rattled the dollars, and cried out as loud as he could, "Spirit of the Mountain, come and take what is your due!" but no spirit was to be seen or heard. The honest debtor was therefore obliged to turn back with his money. As soon as his wife and children espied him at a distance, they hastened joyfully to meet him; but he was much troubled at not being able to make his payment punctually. He therefore sat himself down upon the grass, and began to consider what was to be done. He recollected the particulars of his former bold adventure: "I'll call him," said he, "by his nick-

name, as I did before; if it displease him, let him pinch and pummel me black and blue; he'll certainly hear my call—Number Nip! what ho! Number Nip!" His terrified wife entreated him to hold his tongue; she put her hand before his mouth: he, however, would not be stopped, but called the louder. Of a sudden the youngest boy ran up to his mother, and clasping her fast, cried out, "Oh the sooty man!" Franz coolly inquired, "Where?" "There, there he lurks behind that tree!" and all the children crowded together, shaking with fear, and bellowing aloud. The father looked that way but could see nothing, so he supposed it to be only the child's fear; and in short Number Nip could not be roused, and all his calling was in vain.

The family now returned the way they came, and Father Franz was much dispirited and chagrined. As they passed along, they heard in the wood a gentle rustling among the trees; the slender birch waved his pliant boughs, the tremulous foliage of the aspen quivered; the murmur

approached nearer and nearer, the wind shaking the wide-spread branches of the oaks that grew out of the face of the precipice; the dry leaves and straw flitted from place to place along the road, and little whirlwinds carried them up into the air. The children, who had by this time forgotten their fears of Number Nip, pursued the dancing foliage, much diverted with the spectacle, and constantly catching at the dry leaves, as they were lifted by the playful breeze. Among the flying materials a leaf of paper was blown across the road, and to which the little boy, that had seen the spirit in the wood, gave chase; but when he came near enough to make a grasp, the wind whirled it a little further beyond his reach. He then tried to stop it with his hat, and after several fruitless attempts at last was successful. Seeing it was a clean white sheet, and his economical father having been accustomed to turn everything to account in his house-keeping, the boy carried the paper to him, in hopes of being patted and called a good child. The father opening the folded sheet to examine it, was astonished to find

the very security he had given to the Lord of the Hill! It was torn from top to bottom, and there stood written below—"Received in full. Number Nip."

At this sight Franz was deeply affected: he cried out in a transport of joy, "Rejoice, my dear wife, and you my little ones be joyful; he has seen us, our kind benefactor has heard our thanksgiving; he hovered over us unseen, and knows his debtor to be a man of his word. I am free from my obligation; now let us return home with gladness in our hearts." The parents and children went on, shedding tears of gratitude and joy, till at last they came up to the waggon; but Margaret had an earnest desire to pay her kinsfolk a visit; she wished to shame the unfeeling niggards; so instead of turning back, they rolled cheerfully down the mountain in the waggon, and by evening arrived in the village. They stopped at the same farmhouse from which Franz had been thrust three years before. This time he knocked boldly, and inquired for the master. But a strange person

came to the door, who was not of his wife's kindred. Of him Franz learned that the rich relations had all left the village. One had become bankrupt, another was dead, a third had removed, and their place was nowhere found among the people. Franz and his family spent the night with the hospitable farmer, who gave him and his wife a fuller account of everything that had happened to his cousins. Next day they returned home. Franz went on increasing in riches, and, under the blessing attendant on honest industry, flourished all the days of his life.

LEGEND IV.

NUMBER NIP AND THE GLASS-SELLER.

THOUGH the favourite of the Gnome had been scrupulously careful to conceal the true origin of his good fortune, lest others should annoy his patron by importunate applications of the same kind, the affair, nevertheless, became the country's talk; for when the husband's secret hovers between the wife's lips, the slightest breath will blow it abroad. Margaret communicated it to a discreet neighbour; she to her gossip, the village barber; and he of course to all his customers; so it was noised about in the village, and afterwards through the whole parish.

The broken housekeepers, the idlers, and the spendthrifts, repaired in troops to the mountain, insolently invoking and importuning the Gnome.

They were joined by gold-finders and gipsies, who crossed the mountain and dug holes in every spot, in hopes of finding the copper of dollars. Number Nip let them carry on their operations without molestation, not thinking it worth while to be seriously angry with such vagabonds. Sometimes he would amuse himself by causing a blue flame to dance about in the night, and then allow the gold-seekers to dig up a large pot seemingly full of gold, which they carried home in great triumph, and kept nine days without saying a word, or touching; but when they came to examine the prize, they found only potsherds and pebbles. At last the spirit grew angry, and drove the worthless crew out of his domains by severe hail-storms, and became himself so fretful that no wanderer ventured upon the mountain without apprehension. Scarce any escaped without a scourging. One day, as the spirit lay basking by the hedge of his garden, he espied walking along a poor woman, whose appearance and accompaniments arrested his attention. She had a child at her breast, another rode

on her back, a third she led by the hand, and a fourth carried a basket with a rake, for she had come for a basket of leaves for her cattle at home. "Truly a mother," thought Number Nip; "must be a kind, affectionate creature. See how this woman, without a murmur, drags herself along with a load of four children. This is in faith buying connubial felicity at a high price." These reflections put him in great good humour, and he felt inclined to converse with the poor woman. She sat her children down upon the turf, and commenced stripping the leaves from the bushes, but the little ones soon began to squall unmercifully. The mother immediately quitted her employment to play with the children, tossing one and dandling another, until they were all quieted, and then she returned to her work. Soon after the flies bit the little sleepers, and they began to cry anew. The mother, however, showed no signs of impatience, but ran to the wood to gather black-berries and bilberries to distribute among them.

This maternal proceeding delighted the Gnome

exceedingly. But the younger one that had rode upon his mother's back was not to be appeased: he was an obstinate capricious child, and threw away the bilberries his affectionate mother had given him, crying all the while. This was too much for her patience, so she called out, "Number Nip! Number Nip! come and take this naughty child!" That moment the spirit appeared in his collier's dress, and approaching the woman, said, "Here am I, what is your will?" The apparition threw her into great consternation for a moment, but, taking courage, she replied, "I called thee only to quiet the children, and now they have done crying I have no further occasion for thee." "Dost thou not know," returned the Gnome, "that no one takes such a liberty with me without paying for it? I will have thee at thy word: Give me the child that cried, and I will eat it?" So saying, he stretched out his sooty arms towards the infant. The woman clasped the little one to her bosom, exclaiming, "Monster! thou should'st take my life before I would part with my

See page 82.

child. Come no nearer, or I will strike thee with my rake!"

Number Nip was not prepared for such a resolute refusal, and he started back as if afraid: "There is no occasion for this passion," said he, with a friendly smile, "I am no cannibal, as thou imaginest, neither will I do thee or thy children the least harm; but give me the boy. I have taken a fancy to him; I will bring him up to be a gentleman, and he shall be able to assist his father and brothers hereafter. Here are five golden crowns for him."

"I would not sell this boy for all the money upon earth," replied the mother, hugging her child closer to her bosom.

"Fool! hast thou not three children besides? Are they not enough to load and plague thee? Thou must labour hard to maintain them," said Number Nip.

"That is very true, but I am their mother. I must do my duty by them. Children bring sorrow and trouble, but they bring much comfort also!"

"Comfort, indeed! To watch them night and day, to bear with all their ill temper and caprice! To starve thyself to feed them!" said the Gnome, sneeringly.

"Truly, sir, you little understand a mother's feelings! A single loving look, the sweet smiles and lispings of the little ones repay all labour, trouble, and privation. Look now at this little angel how he clings to me, the coaxer! He is no longer the same boy who cried and screamed so but now. Ah! that I had a hundred hands to labour for my darlings." She knelt down, and gathering her children in her arms, kissed them fondly.

"So then! has thy husband no hands to work?"

"Hands! yes, indeed," replied the woman; "stirring hands too, as I feel sometimes."

"How! can a husband find it in his heart to lift his hand against such a wife?"

"The men are a naughty set," said the woman, with a smile. "'After marriage comes sorrow,'

runs the adage—but I must e'en submit to it, since I have vowed to take Stephen for better or worse."

"If thou wert sure the men were so naughty before hand, it was but a foolish bargain to take one for better or for worse."

"Perhaps so! But Stephen was a brisk, handsome young man, with a good trade; as for me, I was but a poor simple girl, without a penny for my portion. So he came to me with a dollar earnest, and the bargain was struck. Afterwards, indeed, he took away the dollar, and I have the wild man still left!"

The spirit smiled and said, "But perhaps it is thou that provokest him by thy perverseness."

"Oh! he has long driven that evil spirit out of me. Stephen is fond of money, and when I ask him for a few groschen he blusters in the house, worse than you do at times in the mountain. Then he taunts me with my poverty, and I must needs hold my tongue. Had I but brought him a portion, I should know how to silence him!"

"What is thy husband's trade?" asked the Gnome.

"He is a glass-seller: he earns his bread hardly enough, poor fellow! He is obliged to carry a heavy burden from Bohemia hither every year, and if he breaks a glass by the way, wife and children must pay for it! no matter: 'love's blows breaks no bones.'"

"And thou can'st love the man who plays the game of wedlock so foully with thee?"

"Why not? is he not the father of my children? They will make all good again, and reward us for all when they grow up!"

"Poor consolation: I doubt. Children, forsooth, never fail to return mighty thanks for their parents' care and trouble! Thy boys will squeeze the last farthing out of thy pocket, when the conscription claims them, or they will be marched off to be slaughtered by the Turks."

"That gives me small concern," replied the woman, "if they are killed, they will die in the service of their king and their country, but they

may bring home prize-money, and be a comfort to their aged parents."

The spirit now renewed his proposals for the boy; but the mother only shook her head as she raked up the leaves and stuffed them into the basket, on the top of which she tied her infant by his leading strings. Number Nip turned away as if to depart: but the woman, finding the burden too heavy to lift, called him back.

"I called you once," she said, "and you came; be so good as to come again and help me up with this load; and if you will do me any further favour, give the boy which pleases you a Whitsuntide gift to buy him a cake. His father comes home to-morrow, and will bring us some white bread out of Bohemia."

The spirit answered, "I will help you up with your burden with all my heart, but unless thou wilt give me the boy, he shall have no gift from me."

"You have had my answer," replied the woman, and went her way. The farther she walked the

heavier grew her basket, and at last she almost fainted under the load. This seemed extremely odd, and made her fancy all was not right. She imagined that Number Nip had played her some trick; so she sat the basket on a large stone, and turned it over to ascertain if he had not slipped some stones into it unobserved. Nothing, however, but leaves fell out; she therefore filled it again only half full. But the burden soon became too heavy for her again, and she was obliged to empty it once more. All this much surprised the good woman, for she was strong, and had been used to carry great burdens of fodder, without any difficulty. When she arrived at her cottage, notwithstanding her fatigue, she carried the leaves to the goat and the young kids, gave the children their supper and put them to bed, said her evening prayers, and went to sleep with a light and contented heart. The dawn of day and the wakeful infant who impatiently demanded his breakfast, roused the industrious housekeeper out of a sound slumber, to her daily labours. She went as usual

to the goat house with her milk pail! But what a dreadful sight! the poor old milch goat and her kids were dead! The poor woman sank down overpowered with grief on a bundle of straw, exclaiming, "Unfortunate woman that I am! what shall I do now? And what will my sour husband say when he comes home? Alas! God's blessing has forsaken me." At the same instant she condemned herself for the profane thought. "If the poor goats be all the blessing God has given thee in this world, what is Stephen, and what thy children? Still thou hast them! The fountain of milk for the poor suckling is not dried up, and, for the other three, there is water in the well. Suppose Stephen should be angry, and give thee a few hard blows, what is that but a passing storm? My heart acquits me of any fault; I have been guilty of no neglect; harvest is coming on apace: I can then go reaping: and in winter I will spin till midnight. A goat will soon be got some way or other!" These reflections revived her drooping spirits, and she wiped away her tears.

Casting her eyes on the ground she saw a leaf at her feet, that glittered like virgin gold. She picked it up, and behold, it was as heavy as gold. She hurried instantly to her neighbour the Jewess, and with great eagerness showed her the windfall. The Jewess declared it to be pure gold, and, after a little haggling, gave her in exchange two dollars for the leaf. All her sorrow was now forgotten. The poor woman had never possessed so much sterling coin in her life. She ran to the bakehouse and bought bread and cakes for the children, and a pig's pudding, which she dressed for Stephen, when he should come home tired and hungry from his journey in the evening. How the children jumped about or clung to their happy mother as she displayed this unusual breakfast, and then freely distributed it amongst them. Her next care was to remove the goats, with the intention of concealing her calamity from her husband as long as she could, but how was she astonished, on looking into the feeding trough, to see a whole heap of golden leaves glittering in it! The cause of her

goats' deaths was now explained, and she saw no end to her riches ; but in taking possession of them, she also inherited the heavy cares attending upon wealth : she became uneasy and fearful : she knew not whether she should lock up their treasure in the chest, or bury it in the cellar, as she was alarmed for fear of thieves. She firmly resolved not to let her husband know all at once, very justly fearing that the demon of avarice might instigate him to take all, and leave her and her children as destitute as ever. She considered long how she should act for the best, but without coming to any determination, until she thought of the parish priest, who was the counsellor and defender of all maltreated wives. She therefore went in her present difficulty to the good priest, and gave him a faithful account of her adventure with Number Nip, and told in what manner he had helped her to the great riches she was now so anxious to secure, authenticating her story by producing the whole stock of gold. The priest began crossing himself with great earnestness at

this extraordinary narrative, though he was all the while sincerely rejoiced at the good fortune of the poor woman. After a long deliberation he said, "Hearken to me, my daughter. I have thought of a plan to aid thee. Weigh out all thy gold to me, that I may keep it faithfully for thee; then I will write a letter in Italian to this effect, that thy brother who went abroad several years ago, had sailed for the East Indies in the Venetian service, that he died there, first having made a will, leaving thee all his property, under condition that the priest of the parish should be thy trustee, in order that his legacy might be applied to no other person." Then the good priest having conscientiously weighed the gold in her presence, and put it into the church coffer, his spiritual daughter returned home with a joyful heart.

As Number Nip was as much displeased with the savage Stephen as he had been gratified by the behaviour and sentiments of his patient wife, he therefore resolved, for the wife's sake, to

play him some trick that should subdue his surly nature. The heavily laden Stephen had nearly climbed the last hill that lay between him and his home. He was forced to pause more than once before he gained the top, resting the crate of glass he carried each time upon his knotty crab stick, in order to ease its oppressive weight, and to wipe away the big drops of sweat that broke out upon his forehead. At last he reached the summit, and then a smooth even path led to the descent. Midway there lay a fir-tree that had been lately felled, and that part of the bole which remained in the earth formed a natural table, round which grew a luxuriant bed of dark green grass. The place so tempted the weary glassman, that he immediately rested his crate upon the upright log, and threw himself down upon the luxuriant grass. Here he began to consider what profit his stock would produce, and upon calculation he found that if he did not spend a single penny at home, but made the industrious hand of his wife provide for the family, he should

just be able to buy an ass at Friedburg fair. The idea of transferring the load from his own back and walking at his ease, so delighted his fancy for the moment, when his shoulders were raw and sore, that he could not help continuing his agreeable reverie.

"When once I have the ass," he thought, "I shall soon change that for a horse; and when I have got that in the stable, an acre of ground to grow oats will come of course. One acre will soon grow to two, two to four, and so on, until I get a good farm."

He had got so far in his day-dream when Number Nip sent forth a roaring whirlwind, and overset the crate with such violence, that all the brittle contents were broken into a thousand pieces. A loud horse-laugh was heard at a distance, and when Stephen looked around him, and saw that the log and fir-tree had all disappeared, he had no difficulty in guessing who was the author of the mischief. "Scoundrel Number Nip," he cried, "thou envious and wicked Sprite! what have I

done that thou should'st snatch my morsel of bread from my lips, the hard-earned fruit of my sweat and toil? Alas! ruined man that I am, now thou hast taken away all I have in the world, come and kill me!" Indeed, at that instant, he had no more value for his life than for one of his broken glasses. The bankrupt Stephen, having picked up the fragments that he might change them for a couple of beer-glasses at the glass-house, towards raising a new stock, descended the mountain with a thousand dismal thoughts, mingled however with various speculations as to the manner in which he might begin to trade again. Among other things, his wife's goats came across his imagination; but she loved them almost as well as her children; and by fair means, he knew, there was no possibility of inducing her to part with them. After mature deliberation, he therefore determined not to mention his misfortune at home, not even to return thither by day, but to steal at midnight into the house, drive the goats to Friedburg market, and, with what they would sell for,

purchase more glass-ware. Having resolved upon this notable scheme, the unfortunate collector of fragments concealed himself in a copse near the village, awaiting the hour of midnight, that he might rob himself. When the clock struck twelve he set out on his thief's errand; climbing over the low passage door, he stole softly to the goat-house, fearing all the time that his wife would hear him. Contrary to custom, he found the goat-house door wide open, a circumstance which agreeably surprised him, for he discovered in this neglect an opportunity to conceal his own villainy. But in the goat-house all was silent; he could neither hear nor feel anything that had life, neither goat nor kid. In his first alarm he thought that he had been anticipated by some more fortunate thief, for misfortunes, he remembered, seldom come singly. He sank down dispirited upon the straw, and felt himself to be an utterly ruined man. Jane, his wife, in the mean time, had, on her return from the priest, put her house in order to receive her husband, and prepared a savoury meal,

to which she had invited the good priest, and who had promised to bring a bottle of table wine, intending to give Stephen, when the good cheer had warmed his heart, an account of his wife's windfall, and to explain the conditions under which he should be allowed to partake.

Towards evening she looked repeatedly from the window, and then, in her impatience, ran out beyond the village, wondering at her husband's long delay. As night advanced, she became alarmed, and her fears expelled all thoughts of supper. Not a wink of sleep closed her tear-swollen eyes till morning, when she fell into a restless slumber. Stephen in the goat-house did not feel a whit more comfortable; he thought the night would never be at an end, and became so low and crest-fallen, that he had not the heart to knock at his own door. At length, however, he stole out, rapped very gently, and said in a faint-hearted voice, "Pray rise, dear wife, and open the door to thy husband." Jane no sooner heard the sound of his voice, than she started up,

unfastened the door, and joyfully clasped her husband in her arms: but he returned her loving caresses with great coldness, and having put down his basket, threw himself upon the bench. His sorrowful figure, and his evident distress, pierced his faithful wife to the heart. "What grieves thee, my dear Stephen? what is the matter with thee? art thou not well?" He made no reply to her affectionate inquiry but by sighs and groans. She soon, however drew from him the cause of his grief, for adversity having softened his heart, he could not any longer conceal the fatal accident from his tender-hearted wife. Hearing that Number Nip had practised this unlucky prank, she immediately guessed the kind intention of the spirit, and could not refrain from bursting out into a loud laugh—a liberty which would have been severely resented in Stephen's more manful mood. But now he suffered her levity to pass unchastised, and only inquired anxiously after the goat and kids. "Why dost thou trouble thyself about my goats?" said she; "thou hast not

asked one question about the poor children. The goat and kids are yonder in the pasture, and will not run away. As for Number Nip's prank, do not take it so much to heart: who knows how soon he or another may make us rich?"

"Ay, thou mayest wait long enough for that," said the desponding husband.

"Little looked for often comes at last," retorted the merryhearted wife. "Do not despair: though thou hast no glass and I no goat, yet we have four fine children: and four stout arms to maintain them and ourselves: Surely that is wealth enough?"

"If the cattle are gone," cried Stephen, in absolute despondency, "go and drown your four brats, for to maintain them is what I cannot pretend to do."

"Why then I will provide for them," rejoined Jane.

As she spoke the friendly priest came in. He had listened without and heard the whole conversation, so he took up the word and read a long sermon upon the text, "Money is the root

of all evil." He then drew the Italian letter out of his pocket, and interpreted to Stephen that the parish priest for the time being was the appointed executor of the will, and that he had already received the legacy of the departed brother-in-law. Stephen stood up all the while, nodding his head from time to time like a Chinese idol. When he had recovered from the effects of the priest's communication he earnestly embraced his faithful wife, and made her a second declaration of love, not less warm than the first: and though it arose now from very different motives, Jane received it with equal kindness. From this moment he became the most pliant of husbands, a tender father to his children, and withal an industrious house-keeper, for idleness had never been his failing. The honest priest by degrees exchanged the gold for sterling money, and purchased a large farm on which Stephen and Jane lived out their lives. The surplus he lent at interest, and managed the capital of his ghostly daughter as conscientiously as if it had been the

Church money, for which service he received no other recompense than a surplice presented by Jane, and which she caused to be made so rich and sumptuous, that no Archbishop would have been ashamed to wear it. The affectionate mother in her old age had great joy from her children. Number Nip's favourite became a brave fellow, and practised the virtuous lessons his mother dictated, in the unlettered integrity of her heart.

LEGEND V.

THE HEADLESS ROGUE AND THE COUNTESS.

After the last adventure of Number Nip, he appeared no more for a long time. The common people amused themselves with absurd stories, which in winter evenings they span out as long as the thread from their distaffs: but they were all idle inventions, and served but to pass the time away. For one authentic story of the Giant Mountains there were a hundred lying reports, among the vulgar, concerning Number Nip. The Countess Cecilla, was the last person whom the tricksy spirit visited before he dived into the world below never to appear upon earth.* This lady, a victim to all the fashionable aches and pains of her time,

* Washington Irving seems to have remembered this tale when he wrote the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."—Ed.

See page 103.

was on a journey with two healthy blooming daughters, to Carlsbad. The mother was so impatient to try the virtues of the spring, and her daughters to enjoy the company and diversions of the place, that they travelled day and night, without stopping for repose. It so happened that they entered the Giant Mountains on a serene summer evening when not a breath of air was stirring; the nocturnal sky was thickly studded with stars, the bright crescent whose silvery light relieved the swarthy shades of the lofty pines, and a thousand phosphorescent insects that sported among the bushes, like so many sparks of fire, combined to illuminate the forest scene, though the company in the coach enjoyed it but drowsily, as the easy motion of the carriage ascending the hill had lulled mother and daughters into a gentle slumber. But the wakeful Fritz, who was mounted upon the lofty watch tower of the coach box, felt no inclination to sleep: all the stories of Number Nip which he had formerly devoured with such eager attention, arose at once to his mind, now that he was traversing

those haunted mountains, where the adventures had happened, and he heartily wished he had never listened to them. From time to time he cast around a timid look from his half closed eyes and when he espied any suspicious object a cold shudder stole down his back, and his hair grew stiff as bristles. He would sometimes communicate his suspicions to the postilion, and ask with great emotion if any spirit had been lately seen in the mountain, and although the postilion assured him to the contrary, his heart misgave him. After a long pause in the conversation, the postilion stopped the horses, muttered something between his teeth, and then went on again—then stopped—and continued to do so several times. Fritz, who had now shut his eyes fast from fear, inferred nothing good from these performances. Peeping up cautiously he saw to his utter confusion, stalking on about a stone's throw from the horses' heads, a jet black figure, of a size exceeding that of man, wearing a large Spanish cloak, but the most remarkable circumstance of all was this—the stranger

was without a head! If the coach halted, the figure halted also, when the postilion drove on it proceeded also. "Comrade, dost thou see anything," cried the dovehearted Fritz from the coach-box, with a faltering voice and upstanding hair.

"I do indeed see something," answered the other in a low tone; "but keep silence, as I am afraid we shall miss our way."

Fritz fortified himself by repeating all the prayers against evil spirits which he knew, reeking all the time with cold perspiration. When he could bear this state of doubt no longer, he leaned back and tapped at the window of the carriage to arouse his sleeping mistress. The yawning Countess, out of humour at being disturbed from her comfortable nap, sharply demanded, "Who's there? what do you want?"

"Your ladyship," replied Fritz, with a trembling tone, "be so good as to look out of the window: for there walks a man without a head close beside us!"

"Blockhead," replied the Countess, "of what

is thy vulgar imagination dreaming?" and then continued in a tone of raillery, "a man without a head is no rarity; there are plenty in Breslau to my knowledge."

The young ladies could not relish the wit of their honoured mother at such a moment, and they pressed closely to the old lady, trembling and crying out, "Oh! if it should be Number Nip, the Mountain Spirit."

The old lady (whose opinions differed greatly from her daughters' concerning the invisible world) believed in no spirits, and chiding the girls for entertaining such vulgar fancies, proceeded to prove that all stories of ghosts and apparitions were the creations of a disordered imagination: or were traceable to natural causes. Her eloquence was producing but little effect, when the black figure that had disappeared for a few moments out of sight, emerged from among the bushes, and advanced down the road. It was now evident that Fritz had been mistaken—the man on foot had a head, only he did not wear

it, according to the usual fashion, between his shoulders, but carried it under his arm as if it had been a lap-dog. This monstrous figure only three paces off, excited great consternation both within and without the coach. The young ladies screamed aloud, and let down the silk curtains to avoid seeing the figure, thus hiding their heads, like the ostrich when it is run down by the hunters. The Countess clasped her hands in silent agony, and this movement might have excused the inference that she was silently recanting her confident assertions as to the non-existence of spirits. Fritz, against whom the formidable figure in black seemed to be meditating some design, began, in the anguish of his heart, a repetition of his prayers, but, before he could half finish, the monster took his head from under his arm, and hurled it at Fritz, striking him in the centre of his forehead so severely, that he tumbled headlong from the box over the fore-wheel, and in the same instant the postilion was stretched in the dust by a severe blow from a club. The Phantom then uttered these words in a solemn

tone, "Take that from Number Nip, the Warden of the March." Upon this the apparition mounted into the saddle, and began to dash the horses up hill and down—over stock and stone—so, between the rattling of the wheels and the clatter of the horses' hoofs, the ladies' screams were entirely lost. In a moment the number of the company was increased by the addition of a man on horseback, who passed the driver, without seeming to take the smallest notice of his wanting a head, and then rode on before the coach, as if he had been hired for that purpose. The black figure did not seem to relish the society of the new comer, and he turned the horses into another road. The horseman did the same: and, however often the driver changed his course, his troublesome companion followed his example, as if he had been tethered to the coach. This surprised the headless one very much, especially as he remarked, that the rider's steed wanted a leg! The headless driver began to grow a little uneasy: he was apprehensive that the real Number Nip had himself entered upon the scene. After

some time the rider, turning his horse, rode close up to the driver, and asked in a tone of confidence, "Whither away, friend, without a head?"

"Whither away! whither should one go but after his nose?" retorted the driver in a voice of timid defiance.

"Very well," replied the horseman, "let us see, comrade, which way thy nose points," so saying, he seized the rein, took the black figure by the middle, and dashed him to the ground with such force, that every bone in his body rattled again, for the apparition had flesh and bones, as apparitions commonly have. His mask and Spanish cloak were presently stripped away, and out there came a well-proportioned curly pated fellow, a mere ordinary man.

The knave, finding himself detected, and apprehensive of his adversary's anger (for he doubted not that the horseman was Number Nip, whom he had ventured to personate), surrendered at discretion, and begged piteously for his life. "My good lord of the Mountain," said he, "have com-

passion on a wretch who has been the shuttle-cock of fortune all his days: who could never be what he would, but was always compelled to be something else, and now that the world has ignored his existence, cannot even figure as a ghost."

This speech was not lost upon the Gnome, and his curiosity being excited, he desired to hear the adventures of the pretender. "Get up, comrade," said he, "and do as thou art bid." He then, having first drawn out his horse's fourth leg from between his ribs, made up to the coach door, and opened it with the intention of saluting the company, but terror had so overcome the party, that the ladies lay in a deep swoon. The horseman, however, was at no loss what to do, but filling his hat full of water from the rivulet which ran murmuring near, sprinkled the faces of the ladies, and soon restored them to life. They opened their eyes one after another, and beheld at the coach door a well-made man of gentlemanly appearance, and whose manner soon gained their confidence.

"I am very sorry, ladies," said he, addressing

them politely, "that you should have suffered such an insult within my domains from a rascal in disguise, who no doubt intended to rob you, but you are now perfectly safe: I am Lord Giantdale: allow me to attend you to my house, which is close at hand."

The Countess with many thanks accepted this seasonable invitation, and Curly Pate, being ordered to drive on, obeyed with tremulous servility. In order to give the ladies time to recover from their fright, the Cavalier joined the driver, directing him the way he should go, and occasionally calling to him some of the bats that were darting about, and giving them secret orders, a proceeding that added not a little to the apprehensions of Curly Pate. In about an hour a light appeared at a distance, then a party of horsemen came up bearing lighted torches, and who said they had been anxiously seeking their master since sun-down. The Countess by this time had recovered her composure, and finding herself out of danger, she bethought her of Fritz the coachman and Carl the postilion, wondering what had been their fate.

She communicated her anxiety to her protector, who immediately dispatched two of his huntsmen to seek the absent domestics, and bring them to their mistress. The coach now rolled under the dusky arch of a castle gate into a spacious court, and stopped before a stately building that was illuminated throughout. The Cavalier politely offered the Countess his arm, and led her into the drawing-room, where he introduced her and the young ladies to a numerous company, briefly narrating the adventures to which he was indebted for the honour of their visit. After the usual formalities had been exchanged, the company formed into little groups, some sitting down to play, and others amusing themselves with conversation. The adventure of the Countess was the principal topic, and, as generally happens in the relations of past dangers, lost nothing by repetition. Not long after their arrival the polite host introduced a physician, who having made certain inquiries of the Countess and the young ladies, prescribed them a draught of aromatic wine, which had the effect

of putting them all into excellent spirits. Immediately afterwards the supper was announced, and a sumptuous banquet served. The side tables were decorated with plate up to the very cornice, and music in an adjoining apartment gave additional zest to the rare viands and generous wines. After the dishes were removed, the major-domo arranged the parti-coloured dessert, consisting of rocks and mountains of sweetmeats, and gum tragacanth, and the happy wit of the confectioner had represented the Countess's adventure in little wax figures. The Countess observed this costly entertainment in silent admiration. She, turning to a gentleman who sat next to her (and who, according to his own account, was a Bohemian nobleman), eagerly inquired the reason of this great feast. He replied that "there was nothing extraordinary, it was only a social meal for a party of old acquaintances, who had met here by accident." She was much surprised, especially as she had never heard a word of the rich and hospitable Lord Giantdale, either in Breslau or any other place;

and though well versed in the pedigrees of the nobility, she could not recollect any such title. At last she attempted to get from the host himself a solution of her difficulty, but he evaded her inquiries so adroitly, that she remained in ignorance of her entertainer.

The conversation having turned to the spiritual world, a full-fed Canon related many surprising stories of Number Nip, the truth of which was by some denied and by some supported. The Countess was just in her element whenever she could combat superstitious prejudices, and she therefore placed herself at the head of the philosophical party. "My own story," continued the lady, "is evident proof that everything reported of the celebrated spirit is imaginary. Did he abide in these mountains, and had he the noble qualities ascribed to him by idle story-tellers, he would never have allowed a rascal to molest us at the expense of his own reputation; but, poor ideal spirit! how could he preserve his honour? Had it not been for the generous assistance of my lord Giantdale,

the audacious villain who assailed my people might have executed his design of robbing us without any impediment."

The master of the house, who had hitherto taken an inconsiderable part in the philosophical debates, now engaged in the conversation, and observed, that the Countess had entirely depopulated the world of spirits. The whole creation of fancy had disappeared before her arguments, like a mist before the rising sun. "You have in particular," said Lord Giantdale, "sought to prove the non-existence of this Number Nip; yet I think something might be urged against your last observations. How if this fabulous spirit had really a share in rescuing you from the hands of the robber in disguise? How if my fairy neighbour, when he undertook to bring you into a place of safety, had chosen to assume my appearance in order to avoid giving you any alarm? And suppose I should tell you that I have not stirred a step from this good company, as, being master of the house, I could not in common politeness to-night? That

you were brought to my residence by a stranger, who is nowhere to be found? In this manner it seems possible that the neighbouring spirit might have saved his honour; and hence it would follow, that he is not the mere creature of the brain that you would make him."

This address a little disconcerted the philosophical Countess. Her fair daughters looked steadfastly at their host, in order to read in his eyes whether this was said in jest or was seriously intended. A stricter examination of the problem was precluded by the arrival of the recovered servant and postilion: the latter of whom testified no less joy at the sight of his four horses in the stable, than did the former on being shown into the dining-room and there beholding his mistress and her daughters safe, and in such distinguished company. In the exultation of his heart he drew the chief instrument of mischief from beneath his coat, namely the ugly head of the figure in black, which had felled him to the ground. The examination of the head was committed to the Physician, who was present, and

he, without subjecting it to his anatomical knife, instantly recognised it as a huge hollow gourd filled with sand and stones, and worked up into a very grotesque head by the addition of a wooden nose and a flaxen beard.

The company did not break up until the morning was beginning to dawn. The ladies were conducted to state beds with superb hangings and delicate counterpanes: and they had no sooner stretched themselves upon the down, than a sound and dreamless sleep fell upon them. It was far into the day when the Countess awoke; she immediately rang for her maid, and roused the young ladies, and so anxious were they to try the powers of the Carlsbad waters, that they could not be induced by the most pressing invitation of their hospitable entertainer to stop another day. They therefore prepared for setting off immediately after breakfast, promising Lord Giantdale, who accompanied them to the extremity of his domains, to pay their respects to him on their return.

No sooner had the Gnome returned to his

castle, than he summoned the curly-pated impostor to an examination. The delinquent had been furnished with lodgings in a subterraneous dungeon, and had spent the night in fearful expectation or his morning's punishment.

"Vile miscreant," said the indignant spirit, as he was brought in, "what should hinder me from trampling thee to death in my anger, for attempting in my territories, a piece of villainy, calculated to throw so much obloquy upon my name? Thy hide, be assured, shall pay for thy audacity."

"High and Mighty Regent of the Mountains," answered the delinquent, very coolly, "however exclusive may be your pretension to this domain (and I by no means presume to question it), tell me, I pray, where I may find the code of laws which it seems I have unfortunately transgressed. It is surely due to your nice sense of justice to grant me a fair trial before you condemn me."

This answer and the self-possession with which he made it, prognosticated no common character. In this expectation the rigorous judge abated some-

what of his resentment, and replied, "My laws are no other than those which Nature has already inscribed on thy heart, but that thou mayest not complain of being condemned unheard, proceed, and freely confess who thou art, and what induced thee to come hither to rob, as a spectre, on my mountain. So shall I judge thee as I find thee." This the culprit was right glad to hear, and hoped by a faithful relation of his adventures, to turn away the threatened vengeance of the Sprite, or at least to mitigate the punishment for his audacity.

"Once," he began, "in my early days, I went by the name of Poor Rosen; and was by occupation an honest purse-maker in a country town. I gained a miserable livelihood: for there is no profession that keeps a man so low as honesty. Although my purses had a ready sale (because the report went abroad that they kept the money well, as the maker being a seventh son had a lucky hand), my own continued as empty as a conscientious stomach on a fast day: and if my customers found their gold to keep well in the purses they bought

from me, neither the lucky hand of the maker, nor the goodness of the work were anyway concerned in the matter: I impute the advantage solely to my purses being made all of leather; for you must know, sir, that your leather purse always holds money faster than an open one made of silk. The man that is satisfied with a leather purse is rarely a spendthrift, but one who knows how to keep his purse-strings tight. Now, your transparent purses of silk or gold twist are never out of the fingers of your prodigals, and then they wonder that the money runs like wine out of a leaky cask, at a hundred holes? My father earnestly inculcated in all his seven lads this maxim: 'Children, whatever you do, do it in earnest.' So I followed my trade with great zeal and perseverance, but without bettering my condition. There came a dear time; war, trouble, and counterfeit coin into the country. My brother purse-makers thought, 'Base coin, base goods:' but I said to myself, 'Honesty is always the best policy:' so I parted with true wares for false money. I laboured hard till I

brought myself to the beggar's crutch: was expelled from the guild, cast into the debtors' prison; and when my creditors refused to maintain me any longer, was banished out of the country. On my pilgrimage of misery and hunger, I was met by one of my old customers mounted on a stately steed: he called out, in an insulting tone, 'Thou cobbler! thou bundle of rags! thou hast, I see, but half learned thy trade; thou canst make the pot, but not cook in it; thou hast leather, but never a last; thou makest capital purses, but hast not a stiver to put in them.'

"'Hearken, comrade,' replied I, 'thou art a bad marksman; none of thy arrows hit the mark. Dost thou not know that there are many things in the world that agree, and yet are not always together? Many a man hath a stable but no horse: a barn floor and no corn to thrash: a pantry and no bread: a cellar and no beer; and so, according to the proverb, one has the purse, and another the gold.'

"'Ay, but they would be better together,' quoth he; 'if thou wilt come 'prentice to me, I will put

the finishing hand to thee, and as thou already understandest so well the making of purses, I'll teach thee how to fill them, for I am a money-maker by trade, and as both professions agree so well, they should go hand in hand.'

"'Very well,' said I, 'I accept your offer, provided you have the management of the lawful mint where the money is coined for the use of a free city or a sovereign state; but if you coin on your own account, it is neck-breaking work, and commonly ends at the gallows—so I decline your offer.'

"'Faint heart never won fair lady,' said he; 'he that sits by the meat and never helps himself, deserves to starve. What, pr'ythee, is the difference whether thou diest by hunger or suffocation? Every man must die at last.'

"'The difference,' I answered, 'is, that in one case you die like an honest man, and in the other like a malefactor.'

"'Mere prejudice,' exclaimed he: 'what harm can there be in stamping a mark upon a piece of metal? Ephraim, the mint-master, has stamped

plenty with the same mark as our own: what is lawful for one man to do, can be no sin in another.'

"In short the man's arguments were so persuasive, that I could not help accepting his proposals. I soon became expert at the business, and, in obedience to my father's injunctions, drove it on with spirit while I was at it. The making of money I found far more profitable than the making of purses. But while we were coining with all possible success, the jealousy of trade was awakened. Ephraim, the mint-master, raised a persecution against his brethren of the craft, and as I and my partner had overlooked, until we were detected, the trivial circumstance that we were not free of the trade, like Master Ephraim, we were sentenced to hard labour at the fortifications for life. There I lived some years after the rules of the order of the penitential brotherhood; till a good angel who happened to cross the country in order to set all stout healthy prisoners free, opened the prison door to me. This good angel was no other than a recruiting officer, who called me to the noble avoca-

tion of fighting for my sovereign instead of trundling wheel-barrows in his service—I was happy in the exchange: and, resolved to become a soldier in earnest. I was always foremost in the assault, and in case of a defeat, the nimbleness of my heels prevented the enemy from overtaking me. Fortune now seemed to smile; I was soon advanced to the head of a troop of horse, and was in great hopes of higher promotion. But being one day sent out foraging, I followed my orders with such scrupulous punctuality, that I emptied not only granaries and barns, but the chests and coffers of both houses and churches that fell in my way. Unluckily it was a friend's country, so it occasioned a great outcry, and as malicious people went so far as to call it a marauding expedition, I was brought to a court martial, and sentenced to run the gauntlet through a lane of fifteen hundred men. Having thus been discharged from the honourable profession in which I had hoped to have made my fortune, I could think of no resource but to return to my first occupation.

"I had neither money to purchase a stock of leather nor inclination to work, and as I considered myself to have an undoubted property in my own goods—seeing I sold them under their value—I resolved to recover them, and that without dispute or altercation: so I began to sound people's pockets, and judging all the purses I could feel to be of my own manufacture, I condemned them as lawful prizes; and though they were now a little the worse for wear, they in some measure made up my losses. I had, moreover, by these means, an opportunity of recovering some part of my own money, for although it had been cried down, it still passed current.

"My occupation throve for a time. I visited markets and fairs in different capacities, sometimes as a cavalier, sometimes as a merchant, sometimes as a gipsy. This mode of life suited me exceedingly: I found myself in good case, and resolved to go on; but the caprice of my stars never suffered me to be what I wished. I had studied my parts so well, and my hand was become so nimble and

certain, that I never made a false move, until one Frankfort fair, when I fell in love with a rich corn-factor's purse. From the heaviness of the bag, my hand failed; I was caught in the fact, secured and brought to trial, under the odious character of a cut-purse, though I by no means deserved that title in a dishonourable sense. I had formerly, in truth, cut purses enough, but never cut away any man's money-bag, as the accusation ran; but all that I had taken came into my hand of its own accord, as if it were returning to its rightful owner. These distinctions, however just, availed me nothing. I was set in the stocks, and my ill stars decreed that I should be a second time flogged out of my vocation. I, however, watched my opportunity, slipped quietly out of prison, and so avoided the ceremony. I was now quite undetermined to what I should betake myself to satisfy hunger: I failed in my first attempt to become beggar, for scarcely had I assumed that character, than the police in Leibnitz took me under its wing, and on the pretext of providing for me, forced me

to an occupation that went against my inclinations. With some hazard and difficulty I escaped from their rigid jurisdiction, which undertakes to keep the whole world in pupilage: for my rule has always been, *Never get into a scrape with the police.* I therefore avoided cities and roved about the country, as a citizen of the world at large.

"It happened that the Countess passed through the very village where I had taken up my abode; somewhat about the coach was broken, and had to be mended before the company could proceed. I joined the curious crowd collected to gape at the strange gentry, and formed an acquaintance with the sheepish servant, who, in the simplicity of his heart, entrusted me with his apprehensions on your account, Most Noble Number Nip. As they could not cross the mountain that night, in consequence of the delay occasioned by the accident, the idea suggested itself to me of turning to advantage the cowardice of the party, and trying my talents in the capacity of an apparition. I slipped into the dwelling-house of my landlord and patron the Parish Clerk,

who happened just then to be absent. I first laid hold of the black gown, his robe of office, and at the same time the gourd, which acted as ornament to the cupboard, attracted my notice. Thus accoutred, and provided with a sturdy cudgel besides, I betook myself to the wood, and there fitted up my head. What use I made of it you already know. I should happily have executed this masterstroke but for your interference; the game indeed was already won. After getting rid of the two cowardly louts, my intention was to have driven the carriage into the wood, and there, without doing the ladies the smallest injury, have opened a little emporium for the exchange of the black gown, which, considering the service it had rendered me, was of no trivial value, for the Countess's purse and trinkets: and then, having wished the company a safe journey, taken a polite farewell. To say the truth, sir, my fears of you were the least of my thoughts. The world has arrived at such a pitch of infidelity, that one cannot quiet children now-a-days with your name: and if a faint heart like the

Countess's servant, or an old woman behind the spinning-wheel did not now and then talk of you, the world would have lost long ago all remembrance of such a noble personage, I am now indeed better informed, and find myself in your power; but as I have surrendered at discretion, I am in hopes that my sincere confession will somewhat mitigate your anger. It were a small matter, noble sir, for you to make an honest man of me. Were you but to dismiss me with a viaticum out of your brewer's coppers—or pluck me a score of sloes from your garden hedge, as you did for the hungry traveller, who though he bit away one of his teeth at your fruit, found all the sloes metamorphosed into little balls of gold—or if you would make me a present of one of the bright golden skittles you have left since you gave the nine to the students from Prague for beating you at bowls—or only your milk-pan, which changes curds into gold—or if I deserve punishment, beat me, as you did the shoemaker with a golden rod, as the lads of the last tell whilst hammering soles, and then give it to me

as a memorial of the adventure, my fortune were made at once. Truly, noble sir, could you but feel human necessities, you would acknowledge it to be a very hard matter to be honest when you are in want of all things."

"Get thee gone, vagabond!" exclaimed the Gnome, when Curly Pate had ended, "as far as thy feet can carry thee, and ascend the gallows, the summit of thy fortune!"

Upon this he discharged the prisoner with a lusty kick. The latter rejoiced at escaping so easily, and applauding his powers of persuasion, which, as he supposed, had for this time extricated him from a very ticklish situation, he made a forced march to get out of the reach of the vigorous sovereign of the mountain, and in his haste left his black gown behind him. With all his speed, however, it seemed as if he made no progress: he had constantly the same landscape in view, excepting that the castle where he had been confined had vanished. Weary with continual running round in the same circle, he stretched himself under the

shadow of a tree to take a little repose, and wait for some traveller who might show him the way. He fell into a sound sleep, and when he awaked thick darkness encompassed him on all sides. He recollected perfectly that he had gone to sleep under an oak-tree, but he could hear now no whispering of the wind among the leaves, nor could he perceive any star twinkling above his head, nor discern the faintest glimmering of light. He started up in alarm, but an unknown power held him fast, and the motion he made produced a noise like the rattling of chains!

He now perceived that he was in irons, and imagining himself to be in Number Nip's dominions, many thousand fathoms underground, the idea threw him into a violent consternation. In a few hours there was some appearance of day, but the light shone very faintly through an iron grate in a wall. Without exactly knowing where he was, the place did not seem perfectly new to him, and he was in hopes that the gaoler would come to him, but in vain. One tedious hour

succeeded another: hunger and thirst tortured the captive: he began to make a noise, rattling his chains, knocking against the wall, and crying out piteously for help: he heard human voices close at hand, but no one would open the door of his cell. At length the gaoler having uttered a prayer against ghosts, undid the door, crossing himself devoutly, and immediately recognised his runaway prisoner the cut-purse, the unfortunate Curly Pate, who once more saluted his old friend the gaoler of Leibnitz. It was now evident that Number Nip had taken advantage of his nap to transport him to his old lodgings.

"So friend," said the gaoler, "are you caught again in your old cage? How, in the name of wonder, didst thou contrive to get here?"

"Why, by the door, to be sure, man," replied the gaol-bird, "I'm tired of rambling; so I thought I would e'en return to this quiet lodging. I trust you will allow me to occupy my old quarters?"

As it was impossible to explain how the prisoner

had got back into his cell, or who had fastened the irons upon him, Curly Pate (feeling no desire to make public his adventure on the mountain) continued boldly to maintain he had returned of his own accord, having the gift of going out and coming in to places, and putting on or off his fetters at his pleasure. The magistrates were moved by this seeming submission to forgive him the flogging that was his due; they only imposed upon him the task of trundling a wheel-barrow for the benefit of the state, until he should think proper again to dispense with his irons. It is not recorded that he ever made use of the kind permission to emancipate his legs.

The Countess in the meantime arrived safely at Carlsbad. The first thing she did was to call in the Physician of the Wells, in order to hold a consultation with him on the state of her health, and to settle the plan for taking the waters. It was not long before the once-renowned Dr. Springsfeld, entered the apartment,—he who would not

have exchanged the golden spring of Carlsbad for Pison, the river of Paradise.

"Good gracious," exclaimed the Countess, "the gentleman we met at Lord Giantdale's! Why did you not tell us then, you naughty man, that you were the Physician of the Wells."

The doctor started in surprise, then paused to consider: but could not recollect having ever seen the ladies before. "You must doubtless," he replied with a simper, "mistake me for some one else, my lady. I really have not the honour of being personally known to you. My Lord Giantdale is not amongst my acquaintances, and during the season I never on any account stir from this place."

The Countess was at a loss to conceive the meaning of the doctor's denial of himself, and at last she concluded it must be with an intention very contrary to the practice of his colleagues—to decline his fee for the services he had rendered them at the Castle: so she proceeded with a smile, "Indeed, doctor, your delicacy is excessive: but it

shall not prevent me from considering myself your debtor, and acknowledging my obligations for your kind assistance." She then forced a gold snuff-box upon him, which the physician would only receive as a fee in advance, and, lest he should disoblige a good patient, he no longer contradicted her. He moreover easily solved the riddle to his own satisfaction, by supposing the whole family to be affected by a species of vapours, when strange and incomprehensible flights of the imagination are by no means uncommon, and he prescribed accordingly.

Dr. Springsfeld was none of your heavy helpless physicians, who possess no other talent for conciliating their patients than praising their own pills and electuaries. He was well versed in the art of exhilarating the spirits by a number of little anecdotes, and could retail the news of the day with infinite address. In going his round of visits after he had parted with the Countess, he recounted wherever he went the singular interview with his new patient. The story improved upon

repetition, and he sometimes represented the Countess as disordered, sometimes as a person gifted with second sight. The company at the Wells were most desirous to become acquainted with so extraordinary a character, and the Countess Cecilia became the talk of the day. The first time she made her appearance at the rooms with her beautiful daughters, all the world crowded to have a sight of her. But how were the ladies astonished to find all the persons there were the same as those to whom they had been introduced so lately at the castle of Lord Giantdale, and they expressed their satisfaction at being spared the ceremony of introduction, as there was not a single unknown face in the room. The affable old lady addressed herself first to one and then to the other, calling them by their proper names and titles. She talked much of my Lord Giantdale, and frequently referred to the conversation they had carried on at his hospitable board: but was confounded at the cold behaviour of those who but a little time before had behaved to her with so much cordiality. She very naturally

fell upon the idea that it was a concerted scheme, and that my lord himself would end the joke by unexpectedly making his appearance. However, she was determined he should not enjoy the triumph of a victory over her sagacity, so she pleasantly proposed to the Bohemian nobleman to bring their host from his hiding-place.

This proposition, in the opinion of the whole company, afforded undeniable evidence of a disordered imagination. They all expressed their compassion for her, unanimously agreeing, however, that she was a sensible woman, without anything extravagant in her ideas except when her fancy took the road over the Giant Mountains. The Countess was for a time slightly disconcerted by the nodding and winking of the company, and she thought at length the best way to remove any injurious opinion which might exist was to relate her adventure upon the Silesian borders. She was heard with the attention usually bestowed upon a tale that entertains, but of which not a syllable is believed.

"Strange indeed," exclaimed the whole company with one voice, at the same time casting a significant look towards Dr. Springsfeld; who secretly shrugged up his shoulders, and vowed in his own mind not to dismiss the patient under his care until the waters should have washed every trace of the Giant Mountain out of the Countess's recollection. The spring in the meantime performed all the doctor or the patient expected from it. The Countess, perceiving that her story met with small credit among the visitors of Carlsbad, and even rendered the soundness of her understanding problematical, dropped the subject, and Dr. Springsfeld did not fail to ascribe this remarkable effect to the waters.

The old lady being thus happily recovered, and the young ones having tired of the cotillons and minuets, mother and daughters returned with one consent to Breslau. They did not fail to take the road over the Giant Mountains, as they had promised their hospitable entertainer in Giantdale, from whom the Countess hoped to receive

a satisfactory solution of the riddle which had puzzled her so much at Carlsbad. But nobody could direct them to my Lord Giantdale's seat, nor was the name known to any one on either side of the mountain. So at length the lady was unwillingly convinced that the stranger who had rescued her and entertained her was no other than Number Nip, the mountain spirit, himself. She owned that he had practised the rights of hospitality in a very generous manner, forgave him his frolic respecting the Carlsbad company, and from that time forward sincerely believed in the existence of spirits, though she was cautious how she made public declaration of her faith.

Since Number Nip's manifestation to the Countess Cecilia, nothing further has been heard of him. He returned to his subterraneous abode, and as the great earthquake which destroyed Lisbon and Guatemala occurred soon afterwards, and has been continually advancing nearer and nearer, so as to threaten the pillars of the Giant

Mountains themselves, the spirits of the earth have found so much work underground, that they have not had leisure to appear upon the surface of the earth.

THE END.

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